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WHITE RATTLESNAKE;

OR, THE

Red Bandits of the Yellowstone.

By BERNARD WAYDE.

Author of "THE BLACK MASK," "WILD BILL'S BEST SPOT," "THE LANDLORD'S CRIME," "MOLLY MAGUIRE'S REVENGERS."

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WHITE RATTLESNAKE;

OR, THE

Red Bandits of the Yellowstone.

CHAPTER I.

THE RED BAND OF THE YELLOWSTONE—MEDITATING MURDER—NEARLY A ROW AMONG THE BANDITS.

In the weird moonlight, amid a hundred glistening rocks of granite, that threw their grim shadows athwart the green-swarded banks of the river, crouched a dozen villainous-looking, heavy-bearded men, armed with pistols, knives, and rifles.

Judging from their nervous and impatient movements, they must be in wait for some passing traveler.

Their very appearance denotes a desperate calling.

In fact, they are the most sanguinary set of cutthroats on the Yellowstone.

Murder and rapine are their nightly occupation; and woe! to the unfortunate gold-hunter or trapper, that passes the way with anything in his possession worth the stealing.

He *is* sure to meet his death-wound from behind those treacherous rocks—shot down, without word or warning, and left to rot and fester in the scorching prairie sun. Such had been the fate of many a solitary wayfarer by the side of the "Silent River."

So opens the moonlight scene of our story, bordering

on the rippling Yellowstone, the time wanting only two hours of midnight.

Many a murderous glance, is cast by the brigands, from behind those glistening granite boulders, down the winding road, for their expected victim.

And as he comes not, they grew impatient, and murmur disappointedly.

The discontent of the ruffians is only hushed by the captain's stirring voice:

"Keep still, curse you!" he growled, "Can't you wait patiently like me? There's virtue in patience; but there's none in discontented clamboring."

"Well, cap'n, it's narry use sighing over spilt milk, I suppose," ventured a shock-headed, black-browed ruffian; "but why on airth, are we a-waitin' for this fellar?"

"Why!" exclaimed the captain indignantly, "Why!" he repeated, "don't you know that he carries with him bills to the amount of several thousand dollars, and as handsome a sister, as ever tripped on the light fantastic—don't you know *that?*"

Here cries of astonishment were echoed from all sides.

"No, we don't!" yelled a number of voices.

"An' it's the first time, *I* heard that the critter had a gal with him," said the shock-headed, black-browed ruffian again.

"And so you thought this merely a scheme of petty revenge?" sneered the captain. "So it is in one sense; for I never forgave the Devereuxes, curse them, since the time the principal sent me two years to a prison, and broke my poor mother's heart. I hate the whole family with the most intense hatred ever since. I have had the young whelp more than once in my power; but through some strange fatality, he has always escaped. To-night, however, let him look to himself; for, by the God above us, he dies!"

"And what of the gal, cap?" asked the first burly ruffian, with an evil leer lighting his grayish eye.

There was something insulting in the query. The captain's brow grew dark as midnight.

"And what does it matter to you, Bill Grimes?" said he surlily.

"Matter enough!" retorted the bully, with an insolent sneer. "What does it matter to any one, that wants a wife—eh, my pack o' clubs?"

"Hell and devils, man! you're beside yourself!" yelled his leader, wrathfully. "Who do you think I am, wretch?" He leaped to his feet as he spoke, and confronted the burly ruffian, fiercely."

"I serposes, you no more'n a man, like the rest on us" returned Bill Grimes with a provoking coolness.

"And where's my education, ruffian" demanded the leader again.

"Perhaps such a critter as White Rattlesnake 'll tell ye that, for be blowed if I know," said Bill Grimes, with a coarse laugh.

This reply roused the captain to the highest pitch of anger. For an instant he fumed and raged like an escaped tiger.

There was something in the very name of White Rattlesnake that electrified him—that opened some terrible wound—that blanched him for a moment with terror. But he soon recovered himself.

"Fury of hell, man!" he thundered, now rushing forward upon Grimes—"what do you mean by *that?*"

At this stage of the proceedings, there might have been a severe fight, but for the rest of the robbers who there and then flew from their positions among the rocks, and separated the would-be combatants, before a blow could be struck on either side.

"Hold! cap," cried one of the men, "no use a-waitin' here, if yer goin' to brawl'n' over nothin'. This covey with the banknotes, 'll be comin' along presently. He'll hear the row, an' as a matter of course, will think as how there's no good afore him; then who knows but the blessed kid may take it inter his head, to skeedadle with the spondulix."

The captain was about to utter a horrible imprecation, at this sensible but homely advice, when he heard the distant sound of horses' hoofs clattering along the flinty roadway.

"Hist—hist!" exclaimed a half-dozen of the robbers in a breath.

"By heavens! he comes," ssid the captain turning suddenly calm. "Down in the shadow of the rocks! quick!"

The robbers were again hidden in the gloom of the hugh crags of granite.

Not a word or whisper broke the sudden silence of the grave, which now wrapped everything around.

All was still as death. The captain's eyes are peering over the jagged edges of the rocks, out through the yellow moonlight, over the flinty road, for a sight of the pedestrians. There was more than one, evidently from the ringing sounds that came echoing to the ears of the banditti.

CHAPTER II.

THE MURDEROUS BULLET—FEARFUL EXECUTION BY WHITE RATTLESNAKE—THE FLIGHT OF THE BANDITS.

On came the unsuspicious travelers.

The sounds of their horses' hoofs ring music through the crispy atmosphere.

A clear moonlight lights the scene grandly, beautifully.

The river in its thousand eddying ripples. gleams out like a flood of molten silver; and the distant heathery

mountains, loom their magnificent ranges to the star-glinting heavens.

Now come faint breezes laden with the fragrance of a million prairie flowers.

What a sublime and majestic sight.

And this is to be the scene of robbery, murder, perhaps, even worse.

We shall presently see those cutthroat bandits, rush forth upon their prey.

Yes, on come the travelers, unsuspicious of the terrible ordeal they must inevitably pass through.

The winding road becomes less torturous.

The yellow moonbeams flood up their advancing figures, defining well their features, on that flinty roadway.

Man and woman on they come—two of God's creatures, to the slaughter-pen of these terrible bandits.

Heaven help them now.

The gleaming rifle of the robber chief, is leveled with a deadly and unerring precission, along the rugged granite of the rocks.

A flash!—a wreath of curling blue smoke, ascending spirally to the heavens!—a shriek of mortal agony! and the advancing horseman throws up his arms wildly in the air, and falls headlong from his horse, a bleeding, mutilated mass on the flinty roadway.

The horse, with a shrieking neigh, seeing his master fall, dashed maddeningly over the prairie, amid the angry curses of the bandits, who had been intent on his capture.

Shriek upon shriek now rung upon the scene, from the hapless horseman's companion, and the robbers rushed pell-mell from the cover of the rocks, into the moonlight, down upon her.

In an instant she was surrounded by the fierce banditti, who forthwith. and without ceremony, dragged her from her horse.

But he was not to witness this scene of rapine and bloodshed long. The horrors of her situation, and the ap-

parent death of her brother (for he was her brother), brought on a state of insensibility, which consigned her, all but into the arms of death.

"An' what are we a-goin' to do with this feller?" asked one of the ruffians, spurning the young man's body with his foot.

"Let us see to the gal first," said Grimes, with an oath, "for by G— we have other business to do, than look to sich cattle as *him*."

"Hold on there, Bill Grimes," cried the captain, as the burly ruffian was bending over the senseless girl. "That little piece of calico is mine—mine, and no one else's."

Saying this, he strode over to her.

Next instant, Bill Grimes felt a strong grasp on his shoulder.

With a muttered oath, he slunk back among his comrades, glaring fiercely upon his leader.

"Curse you," he growled, under his breath, "I'll pay you for this. My turn will come soon, and then we'll be quits; for I'll tear your white livered heart out!"

The captain, meanwhile, was doing all within his power to restore the unconscious maiden to the realities of her wretched position.

But his efforts proved of no avail. She still remained in her deathly state of insensibility. And the yellow moon was shining down on her pale, and corpse-like face. Her form was motionless; indeed, as still as death.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the captain, "can she be dead?"

He bent over her cold and motionless form once more. He took up her beautifully rounded hand in his. Yes, there were the signs of life, faintly tremoring through her pulse.

"She is indeed alive," murmured the captain, "but in a deep and deathly swoon, I think I went a little too far with my shooting; but that can't be helped just now She'll come to by-and-by."

And while the ruffian captain is using all kinds of ex-

dearments to the hapless maiden, we turn our attention to the bleeding form of her wretched brother.

By the shimmering light of the full-flooded moon, falling in ripe mellowness, on the pale and haggard face of the unfortunate stranger, and speeding gleaming arrows through the rich masses of his raven hair, hanging tangledly, as it did, over his white and massive forehead, we should judge him to be a youth not more than twenty-one.

His form, like his face, was of superb mould, and as the red blood came spurting out of his poor riven body, where the deadly bullet had cut and gashed, he was a picture to arouse the compassion of the hardest-hearted.

"He's a fine fellow, at any rate," said the educated outlaw, "and it's a murdering shame that he should be knocked over so soon—so young and handsome," he kept muttering—"so young and handsome and cut down in the very zenith of his youth and manly beauty. Poor boy, Reginald Barry, big a ruffian as he otherwise is, pities you from the bottom of his heart."

"Do ye know the amount he has on him?" queried one of the robbers, stooping down and searching the pockets of the lifeless form of the young man. "This much," and he drew out a large roll of bank notes, and held them in the light of the moon."

"There must be five thousand dollars there," ventured Bill Grimes, stretching forth his hand to receive the prize.

"No, you don't," said the man. "I'll be custodian or cashier in this case. You might go on a drunk, you know, or even take a trip to the Fife Points in yer native city, without as much as sayin' a solitary good-by to yer old comrades. 'An ounce o' prevention, ye know, pal, is better than a pound o' cure,' any day in the week."

"Curse ye!" growled Grimes, advancing threateningly upon him, "what do ye mean?"

"Nothin' in particular, and everything in general," returned the searcher coolly. "But keep yer distance,

man! I'm the very worst feller in the world, to interfere with, over a matter o' bank notes. I may snarl and growl like a dog; but I bite like a lion; curse me if I don't."

"It's for me then to take the growl out o' ye an' the bite, too!" hissed Bill Grimes, drawing his glittering knife and rushing upon him with a bitter oath. "Take that betwixt yer blasted ribs, an' learn next time how ye address a gentleman.'

But the robber expecting this sudden and murderous movement was prepared for it.

He leaped like lightning to his feet, and darted a little to one side caught the advancing bully such a powerful blow in the face as to fell him almost insensible to the earth.

He would have rushed upon him now that he was down and driven his knife to his heart but the captain leaving the hapless maiden came rushing up and by the aid of his men separated them.

"You are a beautiful lot!" growled the Captain. "Can't you find any thing else to do than fight among yourselves. Where's the notes you found upon his body, eh?"

The notes were immediately given into the captain's possession, and quiet restored once more.

Bill Grimes with muttered threats of vengeance arose bruised and bleeding to his feet presenting such a rueful appearance that the men all laughed at him.

This had no other effect than that of making the ruffian gnash his teeth with impotent rage.

It was drawing very near midnight now.

The moon was in its zenith and shown down in mellow effulgence to the earth, lighting up every object of the surroundings distinct and clear.

Beautiful, balmy midnight!

One of the outlaws at the command of his leader had slunk away among the shadows of the rocks. He soon returned with the implements to dig the apparently murdered man's grave.

Now the loud blows of pick and shovel resound through the solitary scene. The soft prairie soil is flying in all directions. The hole will soon be dug to conceal among its dark depths, this scene of blood and horror.

Another stroke and another and another, rings upon the wilderness of the scene. Then comes a pause as if the digger was exausted.

But that pause brings death!

The terrible bang of a rifle thunders through the still night air and rings out a thousand echoes among the rocks.

Whiz! ping! cleaves the messenger of death through the atmosphere.

A cry of agony, wailing, ghost-like through the moonlight, a red rushing stream of blood, and the grave-digger falls a bloody mis-shapen corpse—shot through the head!

"Thunder of heaven!" yelled the captain, "where did that come from?"

But scarce had the words died on his lips, when a louder and more resounding discharge broke upon the echoes of the preceeding one.

Its effect was terrible, and sent a thrill of horror through the astounded hearts of the outlaws.

No less than three of the red-hearted ruffians fell victims by that last rifle-bullet—two mortally wounded, and the third shot through the heart, who uttering a fearful shriek fell into the grave that had been dug for the young pedestrian.

"Friends of hell!" thundered the captain, leaping from the side of the senseless maiden with a lightning spring, "where did those bullets come from."

Suddenly the truth flashed upon the minds of the outlaws that the terrible unknown, was none other than *White Rattlesnake*, the inveterate and deadly enemy of the Red-Band.

"White Rattlesnake—White Rattlesnake!" cried the outlaws in evident terror.

The only man among them who seemed to treat the matter any way coolly, was the educated bandit, Reginald Barry.

He seemed perfectly at his ease—not caring how the "tide of war turned."

The captain looked vainly for other indications of White Rattlesnake, the great Indian fighter. Not even a solitary curl of smoke, which could easily be seen in the vivid light of that ra ient midnight moon, could be seen.

All was dark, deep, impenetrable mystery.

"Thunder and lightning," said the chief bandit, "are we to remain here, and be shot down like a lot of dogs. Creep up among the rocks some of you, and reconnoitre the position of this devil in the shape of man. If he's on the earth, by heavens! we'll ferret him out, and woe to him, if ever I lay my hands upon him! I'll cut his heart into a hundred pieces!"

The Bandits were proceeding to obey his command, when a sharp revolver crack came piercing on their ears!"

The captain felt the hot bullet ploughing a furrow along his forehead. For a moment he became very faint, reeled, staggered, and was about to fall to the earth; but by a powerful effort of his iron natur , he regained his equilibrium, and fired hi : self in the direction whence he thought the shot came from.

And another and another came in answer. By this time five of the bandits were placed *hors de combat.*

The leader grew terrified at this terrible execution; and why wouldn't he, considering the source of an unknown but certain death that they were exposed to.

The bandits now fired in concert. But such random shooting produced no effect on the terrible unknown; for White Rattlesnake was sometimes known by this name.

The firing at length became so hot that the outlaws fled carrying away with them their wounded, and their young and beautiful maiden, who had not yet recovered consciousness.

On they fled over the broad prairie, but as yet no pursuer hove in sight.

There was the unfortunate young man in the yellow glintings of the moon, pale and corpse-like.

CHAPTER III.

WHITE RATTLESNAKE TO THE RESCUE—SNATCHED FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH—THE VOW OF VENGEANCE.

SCARCELY had the terrified outlaws of the Red Band disappeared when there issued from among the rocks, a tall, magnificent-looking figure, attired in the garb of a hunter.

His face was pleasing to look upon, though stern and unyielding in its outlines. He carried a long and exquisitely ornamented rifle in his right hand, and his belt of tanned deerskin contained a brace of revolvers, and a huge bowie knife.

The rifle was still smoking from the many and rapid discharges it had made, and yet it seemed from its construction that you could fire away for a day without damaging it in the least.

Look closely now by the rays of the moon which reflect on the polish of the handsomely got-up stock and you will immediately observe that you are in the presence of the uncompromising Indian-slayer, WHITE RATTLESNAKE. There gleams on the polished stock a silver embossed rattlesnake, bright and glittering, in the silver moonbeams.

White Rattlesnake could not be more than thirty-five. He was what the fair ones would call an extremely handsome man. He had hair as black as the raven's wing; a mustache silken and glossy, beard and whiskers, and an eye brilliant and penetrating; take this with the superb form, and you have one of the most model trappers, and hunters, that ever graced the broad prairie with his presence.

He was said to be the noblest specimen of manhood in the North-West, by the few who knew him.

And without doubt he was.

He bounded with the speed of thought from among the spiked crags. A few moments after he was viewing the terrible execution of his rifle.

The apparently dead stranger drew from him a startled exclamation as the pallid face reflected in the mellow moonrays.

"Great heaven!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that my young friend, Wilford Devereux, is slain? "Oh, if I had but known this the horde of murderers would have not gone off so easily. Poor Wilford—poor Wilford!"

He bent over the blood-stained body of his young and handsome friend. There was not a perceptible tremor of life in those features—cold and marble-like, as it were in death.

"Poor fellow!" he murmured, "you did not deserve this bitter end. But by the just God above I'll revenge your death—I swear it!"

He again bent over the silent form, and as if a sudden thought had struck him, opened his hunting attire, allowing his hand to wander to the region of what he suspected a lifeless heart.

Another moment, and he uttered a joyous exclamation.

"Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated fervently; "he's alive yet—his heart beats, but oh! so faint; I must give him a little 'chained lightning' immediately—that will revive him."

Suiting the action to the word, he took up the flask which was hanging at his side, and gently forcing open the teeth of the insensible youth, poured a few drops of the fiery liquid down his throat.

The effect was magical.

Wilford heaved a deep and laboring sigh, the delicate eyelids trembled spasmodically, a shivering of the whole frame for a couple of minutes, and he opened his eyes and looked terrifiedly around him; but spoke not a word.

There was a great mass of congealed blood reflecting from his forehead, sanguinarily in the falling moonrays.

From this White Rattlesnake concluded, that his young but unfortunate friend had had a most narrow escape from death.

By a sudden and rapid motion of his head, the bullet had evidently only glanced across the temples.

This was purely accidental, but it saved his life fortunately.

"Lucky indeed,' said White Rattlesnake, "that my poor young friend didn't get shot right in the centre; for it would have terminated his life, in less time than I take to tell it."

The reader will observe that the language of the great hunter and trapper was that of an educated man.

In fact White Rattlesnake was as unique as he was original in his profession. He had received an excellent Harvard education, and on the prairie or in the city, he invariably conducted himself as a gentleman. As he was of a secluded nature, however, few knew him. Those who did not, put him down as a deep and impenatrable mystery. Perhaps he was; we shall see hereafter.

For many minutes did the youthful Wilford Devereux stare around him, wildly, unconsciously.

The handsome trapper had raised him from the green sward, and now held him supportingly on his knee. And this he did as gently as ever woman could.

"For heaven's sake where am I?" came at last the gasping trembling, voice. "Ah now I remember," it said again in half-unconscious tones. "I was shot—*shot to death*! Oh, my sister—my darling little Adele, where are you?"

And the feeble object trembling on the strong man's knee, let his head fall despairingly on his breast.

"Rouse you, Wilford Devereux," spoke the strong musical voice of the trapper, "it's *I*—only I—your friend White Rattlesnake."

"Aha! White Rattlesnake!" said Wilford Devereux, with a mocking laugh, "no, no; don't deceive me—don't make *me* believe that *you* are White Rattlesnake. Villain!" he suddenly exclaimed, carrying his head erect like lightning, "where is my sister?—where have you taken her to?"

"Poor boy?" murmured the trapper, pityingly, "he is not himself—not even my voice does he know. All is destroyed *there* his intellect is completely gone. But his sister Adele—heavens! what can he mean. Possibly it was *her* the robbers carried off with them. I will question him," he added, "and obtain the facts, if it be possible in his present deranged state."

But he thought it extremely doubtful. However, he would essay the attempt, successful or not. And he did.

"Wilford, look again, poor fellow; do you not know me—your dear friend, White Rattleshake? It can't be possible, my dear boy, that you have forgotten my voice?"

This was said interrogatively. The wounded and half-conscious man looked up. A look of sudden and positive intelligence overspread his face. His eye beamed with a new light—the light of reason. His lips murmured some unintelligible words. Then the voice became strong, the sight keener, the look saner, with a fearful realization of the scene which had just passed, and his present helpless and deplorable condition.

"Thank heaven for its kind mercies!" ejaculated the trapper. "He has come to. Speak Wilford Devereux—its I, White Rattlesnake, that addresses you—speak I implore you? What of your sister—poor darling, Adele?"

"My sister—Adele? Great God, where is she?" almost screamed the sufferer.

"Come, be rational, Wilford," interrupted the great Indian-slayer in a kindly tone, "tell me how came you here. But first let me staunch the blood from your forehead, where I perceive, you've received an ugly gash."

"Ah," said the youth; "and I'm wounded, am I?"

"That you are," replied White Rattlesnake; "but fortunately it's no more than a scratch," he added, after first cleansing the thickened gore from the poor fellow's temples.

"It's a scar that will bear with me to my grave," an-

swered Wilford, with a sigh. "But I don't care much for that, were I only assured of my sister's safety."

"Have no fears for her," said the trapper, consolingly, "she is safe for the present. But how came you here? Surely it was a desperate undertaking to travel hereabouts, and at such an hour."

"I admit that," replied Wilford, impatiently; "but in Heaven's name, if you know anything of my sister, tell me of it, for I'm burning with apprehension for her safety. Oh, God—God, why was I so foolish as to expose her to such dangers."

The young man now wrung his hands in speechless agony. In vain did the trapper endeavor to allay his grief. He would not be consoled. And this scene of sorrow lasted for several minutes. At last he grew calmer.

"Know you by whom you were attacked?" queried him of the silver rattlesnake, eyeing the young man from head to heel; for he had now risen him straight to his feet, and supported his feeble form on his arm.

"Alas! no," replied Wilford. "How could I, for the moment I was struck, I became senseless."

"Yes; you were fired upon from behind the rocks," said White Rattlesnake. "Had the night been dark, you might have escaped, but the yellow moonlight flooded treacherously upon you, and lit you to the assassin's keen eye. The bullet ping-pinged, and you fell; but luckily enough, not to do any great damage."

"But why in the name of all that's good, didn't you warn me, friend Rattlesnake," burst forth the injured youth. "Besides, you seeing all this, it seems very strange."

"Because I had not reached the spot when the murderous shot was fired," was the reply. "I heard it, it is true, then rushed speedily to the scene. I hid immediately behind the rocks they had just quitted, and by several discharges, tried to frighten them off, in which I eventually succeeded. Do you know who the marraudders were?"

"By heavens, no!" cried Wilford, grating his clenched teeth together in suppressed agony and rage. "Would to God I did! I'd swear never to rest night nor day until I had brought the deep-dyed ruffians to justice."

"You swear this," said White Rattlesnake in a solemn tone.

"As Heaven's above me!" echoed the youth, with a deep feeling, as his eyes raised reverently to the moonlit heavens.

The solemnity of the occasion we will not attempt to describe here.

There was silence for a few moments—a deep and thrilling silence.

A double vow was registered in Heaven to pursue the villains to the world's end, if need be, until they were amply avenged.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OATH OF VENGEANCE—INDIANS—THE LEADEN TRAIL OF DEATH.

THE moon was descending in its orbit, now casting a gloaming like an eastern mirrage over the prairie and among the jagged rocks, lengthening out their shadows, until they loomed along the short, stunted grass like demons of destruction.

The voice of the breeze increased in volume and soughed mournfully over the rippled river and through the rifts and clefts of the minature precipices.

Midnight had waned. Approaching morning set in. The previous bright glimmer of the stars assumed a pale and deathly hue, and the moon, itself, had turned from

its silvery sheen of dazzling radiance to one that was dull and copperish.

During this swift transition of nature, Wilford Devereux had sufficiently recovered to hear who his assailants were, from the lips of White Rattlesnake.

"Ah," ejaculated the young man, "so it was the villainous Captain Starke that attacked us. But so help me heaven!" he added in sudden excitement, "I'll be even with the rufflanly cutthroat!"

"Well spoken, friend Wilford," returned the hunter, admiringly, "but in your present unfortunate plight you cannot do much to chastise the infernal blackguard."

"You know me not, White Rattlesnake, when you say that," said Wilford spiritedly. "Bah! and do you think a scratch like this is going to deter me from wreaking my just vengeance upon him? No, by heavens! Were it even worse, I would follow him to his mountain fastness, and tear his vile heart from his cursed carcase. Then, again my sister," and the young man groaned bitterly as he said this; "think you I am craven enough to loiter here, and she in danger? Not so. Let us hasten after the ruffians, if you would befriend me."

"But your horse, my dear boy?" suggested White Rattlesnake, kindly.

"They've robbed me of him as well as my sister, I suppose," interrupted Wilford; "but if it comes to that, I can do my traveling on foot."

"No, no, my young friend, you wrong them. Not that they wouldn't have taken it if they could. But the horse bolted like a flash across the prairie, and will doubtless turn up somewhere, if we keep a sharp look out for it."

At this moment a wild neighing rung clear and distinct from a direction far behind the rocks.

Nearer and nearer it approached, as if a horse were galloping at the top of his speed to the spot.

Wilford was the first to recognize it. He uttered an exclamation of delight, brought his fingers to his mouth,

and blew a shrill whistle, that sent a hundred echoing responses over the broad prairie

That signal was an old and familiar one, evidently to the animal, for. with a friendly neigh it came bounding down the steep sides of the rocky hillocks, and never stopped till it arrived at the side of its young master.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed the youth, breathing more freely, "I have at least one true friend."

"And will you not count me in," said White Rattlesnake with pretended displeasure.

"Ah, my good friend," said Wilford, "think not I have forgotten you. No, no, it shall be *two*. But let us hasten after the Red Band. We may yet be in time to to come upon them before they reach their retreat among the mountains."

"If you'll but wait one short five minutes, I'll be with you," answered the hunter. "I've as good a piece of horse-flesh stowed away hereabouts, as ever galloped the prairie."

And without saying another word he was gone.

Wilford watched his receding figure in the waning moonlight. He turned for a moment to caress the faithful animal at his side, and when he looked again the trapper was nowhere to be seen.

He had entirely disappeared. The earth could not have swallowed him; but he was indeed gone.

"A very misterious man," said Wilford musingly, "I knew him three years, yet have no further knowledge of him, than when first we met. But he's good and true. An enemy indeed to evil-doers, as he is a friend to the weak and oppressed, which, saying by Jove, reminds me that I myself, am anything but strong at the present. However, I am not afraid of facing the fire of those brigand ruffians.

"Captain Starke—Captain Starke," repeated the youth thoughtfully, "who is this misterious villain? He seems to be set upon my track, like the destroying angel of old; and yet I know him not. Thrice, now, have I had a narrow escape of death, at his hands. By thunder!" ex-

claimed Wilford, suddenly, "I must discover who this man is, if it cost me my life. He's an enemy, surely, or why should he take the trouble of hunting me to the death—"

The sudden appearance of White Rattlesnake put an end to the young man's further utterances.

He said no more. He resolved within himself, to unravel the mystery cost what it might—ay, even at the risk of life.

The trapper was not alone.

By his side trotted a horse, with a coat as dark as midnight.

It was a proud and noble-looking animal, regal in its firmly rounded outlines, while a strange fire burned in his eye not usually seen even in horses.

"That's my animal," said White Rattlesnake with a look of conscious pride—"What do you think of it?"

"A noble steed indeed," returned Wilford.

"And a devilish knowing one, too," said the trapper.

"We have passed through a great many dangers together; ay, that we have, and you see we are still alive and kicking."

"And, now, let us mount," continued the trapper, "if you be not too weak, from loss of blood, to pursue the journey."

The young man without answering struggled with some difficulty into the saddle.

White Rattlesnake observed this regretfully.

"Poor feller," he said, with a sigh, "evidently his strength is not equal to his spirit. Oh, if he could only hold out until we accomplish our mission. Alas! for Adela—heaven help her, if we are too late!"

Saying which, he with a solitary bound, mounted.

The moon had now got very low in the heavens, and the stars began to glimmer faintly overhead.

They were on the point of galloping away, when a half-dozen terrific yells rung echoingly upon their ears.

"Indians! by heavens!" exclaimed White Rattlesnake, putting spurs to his horse.

The animal, however, moved not a step—in fact refused to stir; but kept neighing frightfully.

Wilford cantered off a few paces. Seeing his companion in a delemma as he thought, he as quickly returned.

The yells rang out again nearer and nearer on the night-air.

"What's up now?' asked the young man in alarm. "Is the animal hurt?"

"No, no!" laughed White Rattlesnake with a wild flashing of the eye, which boded anything but good to the advancing redskins. "the creatures are only watch-for our enemies. It is my candid opinion that we are surrounded. Look to your arms, Wilford, if you have any!"

Fortunately the members of the Red Band had not taken the trouble to deprive a dead man as they thought of his arms, so that the young man had two elegantly constructed revolvers well-loaded, besides having a huge bowie knife stuck in his leathern belt.

He drew forth the former without a moment's hesitation, and grasping them firmly in either hand said with a quiet, manliness, and without the least sign of bravado:

"And now I'm ready. Will we cut our way through those yelling devils?"

"Not yet," said White Rattlesnake. "We must see the enemy first, my boy, before we make a single movement. You are not used to Indian fighting, Wilford," he added, "or you would make no such suggestion. The creatures are creeping upon us in all directions; but or the life of me I cannot see even one yet. We must be careful."

Then there came a solitary whoop, ringing a hundred discordant notes through the gloaming.

"Down! Wilford—for heaven's sake, down! They are going to fire upon us!" the trapper cried startlingly.

Devereux understood the hunter's half-entreaty, half-command. He bent his flat upon his horse.

Hardly had he done so, when the thundering report of

fire-arms rung out upon the night, and a dozen whistling bullets cleft the air where their bodies a moment before were exposed.

The horses escaped without a scratch.

The reader may think this strange enough.

But the Indians as a general rule are excellent marksmen, and had no desire to injure animals that they could either sell or trade off.

So that is one good reason why they escaped scratchless.

Ere the echoes of the reports had died away in the distance, White Rattlesnake and his companion arose with erect bodies, in time to see a number of black forms leap as it were from the bowels of the earth.

On they came crushing, yelling and tearing like the denizens of some mad-house.

There was a little light left; for the moon had not altogether sunk behind the chain of hills in the west.

This was enough to give the trapper and his companion an idea of how they were beset and by whom.

In the first place they knew the approaching enemy was a tribe of Indians; but as so many tribes loitered in the vicinity of the Yellowstone it was difficult before to determine which it was.

But these few glintings of an expiring moon settled that question.

"By heavens! they are Dacotahs!" exclaimed our gallant hunter. "But what could have brought them in this direction?"

"Ay, that was it—what could have brought them there?"

Now this was one of the enigmas which remained to be solved; but they had other work on their hands just then.

"Now for it, Wilford," said White Rattlesnake, in a low, deep and intense voice. "Be careful! Fire low!"

Suiting the action to the word himself, he levelled his pistols and with his keen eye flashing along the glittering barrels fired.

"Crack!—crack!" went the reports, cleaving the sighing winds, and dying among the crags instantly.

There were two frightful screams of agony ringing above the echoes created by the shots, and the next moment two of the war-painted savages, fell in their death agony.

But this was not all.

For Wilford Devereux, observing the direction selected by his elder and more experienced friend, determined not to be behind him in dealing out death to his enemies.

So turning with the speed of thought half in his saddle he brought his pistols to bear upon the mobby yelling foe who approached him from the rocky boulders.

Despite the wound he had received, his hands were steady, and for the moment his nerves were iron.

He took a swift and deliberate aim.

The muzzles came up like streaked lightning, glittering omineously in the dull descending moonbeams. The young man's face had the stern pallor of a corpse! He was dangerous just then—so dangerous, that heaven help him, who crossed his path at least as an antagonist!

A second more and he fired!

Loud rung the reports of his revolvers, but it was not merely a noisy firing, for three of the advancing Indians uttering their death-yells fell without life or motion, dead on the green sword of the prairie.

But the fierce Dacotahs were not intimidated a whit by the terrible firing of White Rattlesnake and his companion.

In fact they did not know who White Rattlesnake was, though they had heard his name mentioned in the extremest terror, many and many a time.

If they had known the fact of this great hunter's presence, they might not have been inclined to rush from under cover upon him without first adopting more cautious measures to ensure success.

But now the great hunter and trapper White Rattlesnake was taken at immense disadvantage.

He had an inexperienced companion, in young Welford, yet by no means a despicable one, as the last shots proved; but notwithstanding he was still at disadvantage, for there

were fifty at least of the infuriated savages coming down yelling and tearing upon them.

It was all folly to expect success opposed to such a host of determined enemies;

All this had run through his mind in a couple of seconds, and was prepared to act accordingly on the suggestion of his common sense, which advised flight at any cost.

At this moment the cry of a prairie wolf sounded in shrill notes through the fading moonlight.

The previous uproar gave way to a death-like stillness.

"Down again!" he almost screamed. 'Quick for heaven's sake!"

They instantly struck the same position as before, and to make security doubly sure even a little lower.

Fortunately for them just then the moon sunk behind the distant range of mountains, leaving the whole landscape almost in total darkness.

The savages fired, but they were too late. The black and moonless gloom had set in too suddenly upon them.

Their shots whistled harmlessly over the heads of the trapper and his companion, while some *ricochetted* under the horses bellies. and rattled through the stunted prairie grass, almost to the rocky acclivity.

White Rattlesnake gave vent to a thundering cheer, when he saw the harmless effect of the enemies shots.

"We'll give them a parting salute," he whispered to Wilford.

"And then?" interrupted the young man, casting an uneasy and inquiring glance through the gloom, in the direction which the robbers had taken. "And then" he repeated, "will we travel in the wake of poor Adele's villainous captors.

Now this was a question White Rattlesnake was unprepared to answer just then.

He had broached a quite different plan in brain. But to encourage Wilford, he said:—

"Rest assured, my young friend, as soon as we escape the clutches of these red devils, we will instantly pursue our journey; but now let us give them a parting good-night, and

above all things be careful how you fire; belch thunder and lightning upon them!"

The latter sentence was uttered loudly and determinedly.

Four screaming shots cut the thick morning air, and two terrific yells of agony as loud as any of the preceeding ones, told the trapper and his companion that they had not fired in vain.

"Two more of the red villains, gone to the happy hunting grounds," said Wilford Devereux exultingly.

"And a few more than forty yet to contend with," joined White Rattlesnake. "'Them's odds if yer like,' as Trapper Jake used to say."

"Well what would you advise?" asked Wilford—"cut through them?"

"No; that would be too dangerous," answered the trapper significantly.

"Ah! How so?"

"Because before you could say Jack Robinson, they can mount forty of the best Indian ponies in the country. These Dacotahs have always good stock on hand," said White Rattlesnake. Then he added: "but I'll tell you what we will do; we'll play a trick upon them, that they'll never forget till their dying day. Come! Dismount. Be silent and cautious.

The last words were said in an intense whisper; and Wilford obeyed, dismounting as silently as he could.

But a series of fearful yells rung out again on the night air.

For the present we leave White Rattlesnake and his companion, to pursue the thread of our narrative in the midst of the cutthroat band that acknowledged the bloody Captain Starke as its leader.

CHAPTER V.

THE Red Bandits under Captain Starke seeing their number so completely thinned, beat a hasty and percipitate retreat across the prairie.

They had the humanity to carry their wounded with them.

Two of the brigands bore the hapless Adele Devereux, unconscious as she was, close in rear of their comrades.

The night breezes swept murmuringly over the wide waste of short, stunted grass, and fragrant prairie flowers.

Then would there grow more intense, articulating with a seeming mournfulness, like a funeral dirge, as they brushed along.

Captain Starke was a man whose fierce nature little brooked so signal a defeat, as he had met at the hands of the hunters that night.

He contented himself, however, with pouring out bitter invectives on the devoted heads of his remaining men, and hurled an occasional oath, unmentionable in these pages, from its very grossness, consigning to the lower regions his gallant enemy, White Rattlesnake.

The hunter was a man he dreaded in his heart; and why he did so was a mystery to the bandits.

But who did not fear the almost superhuman prowess of White Rattlesnake?

Need we say that the lawless whiteman, and the bloodthirsty and treacherous Indian had good reason to fear him.

But more of this anon.

Captain Starke was not a little humiliated at his disgraceful defeat; but he sometimes reasoned a very good excuse for himself about the sacrifice of human life, and, as it were, the almost unknown, and invincible source

from whence the murderous shots came. There were times when even this sort of excuse didn't suit him. Then his angry growls of dissatisfaction grew unbearable.

Reginald Berry was the only one of the band, that preserved aught like a quiet, cool demeanor. He had very little to say. He appeared to be reflecting very deeply.

Bill Grimes on the other hand, used up every oath in his vocabulary, which the reader will admit must have been a pretty extensive one, considering that Bill was the most methodically professional "swearist," on the plains in those days.

The other members of the band were not so much behind their co-laborer in this delightful occupation, especially as they had to carry their wounded comrades, between them.

So they stamped and swore, and swore and stamped, until even they had used up every curse in the meshes of their memory nets. And after thus steaming of a portion of their wrath, they breathed more freely, and exhibited a quietude that would have been the envy of the most peaceful assemblage in existence.

"This is a cursed unfortunate business," said captain Starke, after observing a silence of more than a half an hour's duration. "I didn't expect the denoncement to turn out half as bad as it did."

"Neither did I," growled Bill Grimes; "but it's no use a grumblin' now, Cap, we paid the piper, for our infarnal foolishness that's all."

"An' some o' our best fellars gone too," groaned another.

"That's the fortune of war, at any rate," said Reginald Barry with a laugh. "It's no use finding fault with it—not the slightest."

"Is that gal comin' to yet?" Asked Bill Grimes leering savagely in the direction of the unconcious Adele. "If she air, I'd like to hev a word with her."

"Don t go now and act like a confounded jackass, Grimes," growled out Captain Starke. "I have told you

before to have nothing to say to another gentleman's property."

"Ah! ah! ha!—he! he! he!" laughed the burly bandit coarsely. "What is the world a comin' to?—the captain must hev all the spiles to himself now. If a pretty gal falls into our hands, a fellar musn't as much as wink his peepers at her. Well, well, yer a rum blade Captain. Ha! ha! ha!" ended Grimes whirling the ringing echoes of his hoa se laugh through the night air.

"Shut up!" gnashed the captain 'twixt his clenched teeth. "Do you want to have us all murdered before we reach our horses?"

"Then why in thunder didn't yer picket the horses a leetle nearer?" growled Grimes, with an evil flashing of his eye. "You don't expect that men is animals, do yer?" interrogated the ruffian.

"Peace! Grimes," interrupted Reginald Barry. "This is no place to dispute the point. You know not the moment that some prowling band of Sioux's may come down upon us."

The burly ruffian had intended on some ungracious reply to this prudent forewarning; but thinking better of it, sunk into a sullen silence.

Before the moon had gone down they reached the deep tinted foliage of the grove where they had picketed their horses.

Under Captain Starke's instructions they weaved a litter of branches for their wounded comrades, hoping by this method, to convey them the more easily to their retreat in the mountains.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRAIRIE CANYON—ATTACKED BY THE SIOUXS.

THE robbers now got their horses out from among the branches and dense undergrowth of the grove, preparatory to starting forward to their mountain fastness.

Each litter bearing the wounded, was placed between two horses, and secured by means of stout strips of bark, which were fastened to the animal's bodies.

The command to march was at length given, and on they went, at a gentle canter, past the grove toward the distant hills, which in the fading moon, looked down with dark and solemn grandeur.

They proceeded thus for a couple of miles, without uttering a single word.

And as they were passing one of those deep canyons, so numerous on a north-western prairie, they heard a sudden and startling noise, as it issuing from its depths.

Next instant the night air rang with horrible yellings, and several shots came bang! bang! through the semi-darkness.

"The Sioux, by heavens!" exclaimed Captain Starke. "Ready for them bullies! Bring forth your arms! Look out there!"

This shrieking command was addressed to the man who had charge of the yet unconscious Adele.

He veered his horse around as quick as lightning.

And just as he did so, a dozen stalwart Siouxs came rushing from the chasm-like depths, uttering their fierce war-whoops, and brandishing their gleaming tomahawks in the now lurid moonbeams.

On they rushed, out into the open prairie, yelling and screaming like madmen.

Captain Starke instantly divined their intention, and at that moment thanked God that he had not White Rattlesnake to deal with.

But Starke was a brave man, notwithstanding that he was a great bully, and without a moment's hesitation, and in an unquavering voice, ringing in clarion tones, over the canyon, he gave the command to fire.

The robbers were prepared, and the result was a deafening and thundering report, which astounded the savages for a moment.

The aims were true, and several Indians bit the dust, screaming in the agony of death, as they fell over the brink of the canyon, disappearing in its dark depths.

Five of the great Sioux nation had fallen in that volley.

But there were at least ten more that rushed out of the darkness, yelling defiantly, and brandishing their instruments of death and torture.

But Starke, ruffian as he was, met them in the same cool, determined and energetic manner.

Giving the word himself to his men first, he fired four consecutive shots from his revolver, to the utter dismay and terror of the Indians, who reckoned it as something supernatural.

But nevertheless their chief urged them on.

The last firing of the bandits had stricken four more of the savages to their mother earth, some mortally wounded shrieking in their death agony, others stone dead, for the bullets of the robbers had passed through their hearts.

There was an incident which now took place that nearly drove Captain Starke distracted.

Poor Adele in the middle of the fierce din and rapid discharges awoke from her death-like trance, and began screaming at the top of her voice for help.

It was evident for the moment that she was partially insane.

Be this however, as it may, the savages caught a glimpse of her, especially the young chief of the Sioux's, a brawny and muscular fellow with a lithe figure, who could leap with the agility of a panther.

This chief was called Lightning Arrow. And well he earned the name; for in Athlectic sports he was the equal if not the superior of any warrior in the Sioux nation.

Hearing the maiden shriek for help, and seeing her agonised face and streaming hair in the descending moonlight,—he rushed in front of his braves, determining at least to have some prize to bear away with him.

Nothwithstanding all that the robber could do, that had her in charge the chief, with a fierce yell, hurled him to the earth, and seizing hold of the shrieking maiden was about to bear her away with him.

Starke fumed and raged like a tiger, commanding his men to rush upon him.

But they happened to have just then more on their hands than they could possibly attend to: for, indeed, it was with difficulty that they withstood their ground before the advancing Indians, who still kept yelling, firing and flourishing their hatchets.

Captain Starke seeing at this juncture that his commands to his men were of no avail, levelled the savage assailant who had attacked him, and flew forward to rescue, or rather, hold the maiden, whom with a fierce exultation in his malignant heart he intended making his wife.

The young chief, Lightning Arrow, was so much engrossed in cutting the thongs which bound the hapless maiden to the horse, that Starke crept upon him suddenly and delivering one fierce blow with his bowie knife, the warrior chief fell back howling with pain.

A moment after and he was senseless.

"To horse!" rang the captain's hoarse voice after he had rebound poor, weeping Adele once more to the back of the animal.

Starke saw the only hope of their present preserva-

tion lay in flight, and he gave the foregoing command in a hoarse despairing voice.

The Red Bandits up to this, had escaped miraculously.

The semi-darkness that was fast over-spreading nature, apparently saved them: and the only man that had met any thing like a mishap, was he who had charge of Adele: but in a brief time he too recovered.

The banditti, seeing the terrible result of continuing a struggle that would result so disastrously to them, concluded to leave their wounded to the tender mercies of the enemy.

This they did as there was no hope in trying to save them.

On the command, "To horse!" ringing hoarsely on the night air, they gave a vigorous yell, and beating down those of the savages who tried to oppose them, cut their way through the remainder, galloping madly after their captain over the now darkened prairie, for the moon had gone out with a dull reddish glitter.

They were in total darkness, and had this advantage over their savage enemies in the rear.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIGHT FOR LIBERTY—TRAPPED AT LAST—TERRIFIC STRUGGLE OF WHITE RATTLESNAKE.

We have before adverted to the dismounting of Wilford Devereux and White Rattlesnake in the darkness that ensued on the setting of the moon.

The increasing breezes of the prairie may have carried the sounds slight though they were to the ears of the ever watchful savages.

Among all the Indian tribes, perhaps the Dacotahs are the most acute in their hearing.

Their acuteness was at least shown pretty well in this

case, and their yells came in answering confirmation of what they *had* heard.

"The accursed Dacotah dogs have heard us," said White Rattlesnake grinding his teeth.

Another yell came in response, and as corroborative testimony of the fact, then a sudden and swift pattering of feet in different directions, especially from whence the rocks loomed sombrously in the darkness.

"Ay, by heaven!" exclaimed Wilford scarce able to repress his anger, "and it was all my doing," he added, with much bitterness "Had I dismounted like you, they would not have heard us. Fool! fool! why did I not think of this before—while it was yet time."

"Don't blame yourself, my young friend. It wasn't your fault. We must make the best of our way from here now, or it will go hard with us."

"So it will—so it will," said Wilford Devereux, looking anxiously around him, trying to pierce the darkness for the approaching forms, that were coming swiftly but cautiously upon them. But is it possible to escape now?" he asked, with despair trembling on his very lips.

"Why not," was the re-assuring answer.

White Rattlesnake had always an hopeful way of viewing things, and with his invincible courage, he never failed coming out of a scrape or skirmish first best.

Even had he felt the despair evinced in the tremored words of his companion, it wouldn't be politic on his part to own up that it was a forlorn hope. No, rather would he buoy the young man up to make a desperate attempt for liberty. If they didn't succeed then came death, falling like brave men with arms in their hands.

Thus reflected White Rattlesnake in whose brave heart never a coward fear appeared.

But when he'd think of the unfortunate Adele, and the fate that might be meted out to her, by the ruffian Captain Starke, then he would shudder through his great sinewy frame, and the strong man of a moment before would feel as faint as a child.

We have said the threatening yells of the savages rung dangerously near them.

Fortunately it was now pitchy dark. Not even the dull glimmering stars of morning lurked out. There was only a gradually swelling breeze, brushing over prairie and rock, and this now was slightly in favor of the great trapper and his companion, for by its aid they could distinctly hear their savage enemies rushing almost noiselessly along.

"We will elude them yet," said White Rattlesnake encourageingly "Let us give them another few shots on all sides of us—it will create a temporary panic, which may help us materially to escape. How are your shooting-irons?"

"I have four or five bullets for the red ruffians," replied Wilford confidently.

"Enough," said White Rattlesnake. "Fire quickly, and trust to your humble servant and Providence for the rest. For if we succeed in creating disorder among them, but for a few minutes, I'll lead you out of the 'land of bondage,' through a retreat that will take them, all their time to discover. Blaze away at the varmints, and be more than careful, my young friend, that you fire low."

"Are you ready?" asked the trapper in a deep whisper, whose tell-tale voice even the winds couldn't bear away with them.

"All right," replied the young man through his firmly clenched teeth.

"Then give it to them!" said the trapper. And suiting the action to the word, he fired.

Three shots rang loud and clear through the darkened space, while their vivid flashes of flame lit up the gloom.

These sudden and consecutive discharges were followed by a hoarse shriek of mortal agony, from the midst of the advancing Indians.

Yet this was not all.

Wilford Devereux, following his friend's example, took

particular note of the crouching forms amid the flashes of flame.

He brought his revolvers up with a firm hand and a keen eye.

He measured the distance which separated him from his enemies, and fired—aye, fired with a vengeance!

His shots were as quick and as sudden as White Rattlesnake's; and having the advantage over the great hunter, from the fact of his shooting last, he did more execution.

When the sharp, whip-like reports of his pistols echoed among the crags, the answering response of a couple of terrible screams, told him that he had done his work well.

Two Indians had gone to the happy hunting-grounds.

The rapid firing following so close on each other, together with the damage that was done, served to throw the savages into the utmost confusion.

But White Rattlesnake wisely concluded that this would not last long, and as sensibly made up his mind to get out of the way, as soon as possible.

The Dacotahs, he reasoned, though panic-stricken for the present, would not remain long so, especially, as they were one of the bravest and most warlike tribes among the Sioux nation.

There was one thing, however, that White Rattlesnake never dreamed of.

Their painted enemies had reasoned them invincible. This was the result of the terrible accuracy of their shots, which had plowed down a dozen of their bravest and most intrepid warriors.

But as the great hunter did not know this, he prepared for immediate flight.

"That last shot of yours was a good one, Wilford," he said, "and now while all this confusion reigns in the midst of our enemies, we may as well decamp"

"Where would you lead me to?" asked the young man, innocently. "Could we not ride through these

frightened hell-hounds, for the retreat of Captain Starke?"

"No; that can not be at present, Wilford," replied White Rattlesnake, hurriedly. "But I'll show you a way by which we can avoid these red devils. The secret I have never disclosed to mortal man yet, but as 'circumstances alter cases,' it can't be helped, I suppose. Come, and ask no questions."

Now, all the foregoing was spoken very rapidly, and, indeed, didn't occupy more than a few seconds.

Wilford bowed his head in token of assent, but said nothing otherwise

He knew the value of implicit obedience too well, to make a demur at such a time; so instead of uttering useless objections, he followed his friend swiftly, almost noiselessly, toward the rocks.

But as noiseless as were his movements, the alert ears of the Indians heard them, and, that too, notwithstanding the confusion they had been thrown into previously.

And besides, these were not the ones who had believed in their invincibility.

With terrible yells and ringing war-whoops, three savages rushed down from the nearest point of the rocks, and hurled themselves upon White Rattlesnake and his companion.

But the great hunter was equal to the emergency.

He was a man of herculean strength, and as agile as a panther.

He let go the bridle of his horse, warning Wilford, at the same time, to look to himself.

On came the Indians, yelling and flourishing their hatchets in the darkness. But this time they had reckoned without their host. As they came bounding up, White Rattlesnake measured the distance by their pattering footsteps, and soon their black forms came rushing down upon him, from out of the gloom.

The rifle with the silver rattlesnake, was clubbed instantly, swung over his head like a flash of lightning, and

the next instant it descended on the head of one of the savages, crushing it like a piece of tinder.

The Indian fell in his tracks, a dead man.

"That'll do for number one, I reckon," said the hunter, coolly. "And I suppose you, too, want unwinding off this mortal coil," addressing the other, "but I'll serve you different to your comrade, take my word for it."

Saying which, he let his rifle drop among the stunted grass, and as the savage came up with his razor-edged hatchet above his head, ready to strike the murderous blow, he caught him by the two arms, and held him in a cat-like grip.

The Indian screamed horrible; but all to no purpose. The next moment White Rattlesnake held him high above his head, as if he were but an infant.

The object was plain. He intended dashing him into a hideous mass against the razor-pointed crags.

Instinct told the savage his doom. He shrieked in the agony of his heart.

"Mercy!—oh, for God's sake, mercy!" he cried in excellent English, "for sweet Charity's sake, don't kill me!"

"Why do you ask mercy from me, vile renegade?" demanded White Rattlesnake, in a low, hissing voice. "Did you ever show mercy to the poor wretches, that have fallen into your power? *No!* Then die! accursed villain! It would be a sin against humanity to let you live!"

And with that, he hurled the screaming wretch with superhuman strength against the jagged rocks. Nor did he look to see what became of him after. He reckoned that he must be dead; and without more ado, he picked up his rifle from among the grass-blades, and turned to look for his companion.

We have said that these Indians rushed from among the rocks upon the hunter and his young friend, Wilford Devereux.

But these had divided their strength.

Two had borne down resolutely upon the trapper, while the other took the younger man.

White Rattlesnake having disposed of his assailents, turned his attention to Wilford.

Fortunately for the young man that he did so.

Wilford's antagonist was a savage of brawny and muscular build. He was even more interposed than his comrades, and leaped around poor Devereux pretty lively for a few moments, swinging his hatchet in his face, and cutting all manners of capers in order it would be seem, of terrifying and torturing his victim, before he scalped and put him o death.

The young man might have shot him easily; but every chamber of both revolvers was empty. And so the Indian was allowed to continue his delightful recreation, much longer than he might otherwise have done.

The savage was so intent on this game of leaping and dancing around his anticipated victim, that he as entirely forgot the presence of White Rattlesnake, as if that noted individual had never been born.

Perhaps it was, that he was so certain of the issue, that he delayed the execution of his grand project too long, or, on the other hand, perhaps he had so thorough a contempt for the prowess of the whiteman, that he deprived putting himself out in so small a matter a particle. Be this, however, as it may, he had got to the end of his tether, as White Rattlesnake bounded like a tiger on the weakened frame of the young man, hurling him like lightning to the earth.

There Wilford lay helplessly struggling with the savage. But his struggles were those of a child compared to the strength of the powerful and brawny Indian.

He was becoming weaker each instant—he was fainting, dying!

A glaze had already passed over his eyes. He tried to shriek for help! The words died in hollow murmurs on his lips!

And now he felt his hair clutched in the broad palm of the savage.

Oh, horrible, horrible! Will he be scalped?

It was at this moment fortunately for Wilford, that the

hunter's eagle eye saw the desperate strait in which he was placed.

He turned from his work of death, and bounded forward, as quick as the very lightning that flashes through the heavens.

Thud! rumbles a heavy blow. It is delivered with the stock of the hunter's silver-mounted rifle.

The brawny Indian loses his deadly hold, and with a muffled groan struggling to his lips, falls back—dead.

The trapper's rifle had mashed his skull in, and poor Wilford had sunk back almost unconcious,

A few drops of whisky, however, from the trapper's flask revived him.

"That was a narrow escape, my dear young friend," said White Rattlesnake, in a cheery voice, as he assisted him to his feet.

"Are you much hurt, Wilford?" he asked anxiously.

"No," returned Wilford, "if except the fright at the thoughts of so suddenly and horribly being put to death. Fancy oneself being scalped; ugh! it's a fearful thing," he added with a shudder.

"And so it is, but not when you are used to it," replied White Rattlesnake, sententiously. But if you can stand the wear and tear of a race for life," he added, "we had better be jogging on."

Now it wasn't so very strange a thing after all, that the Indians should have remained so long inactive. In truth the Dacotahs were very superstitious, and considering what we foregoingly stated to the reader, they really must have thought their anticipated victims were under the protecting arm of the Great Spirit

But to make sure whether their suspicions were correct or not, they despatched forward a scout to reconnoitre the positions of the whitemen.

The savage performed his work admirably, creeping along the stunted prairie grass like a snake to within a few paces of the whites.

It was then he saw one of the warriors of his tribe hurl young Devereux to the earth. He waited to see no

more, but sped back to his comrades with the intelligence that they were no more invulnorable than any other people.

This assurance was all the Dacotahs needed.

With one accord they bounded forward with the stealthy and cat-like tread of panthers. They could see the forms of the whitemen through the darkness, and making sure of their prey, they uttered a series of yells that broke hideously, horribly through the night air.

There's a great rush—a pattering of feet—a clashing of steel, and several shots with their blazing flashes, all mingling together in one confused clatter.

Young Devereux is again dashed to the earth, (it's easy indeed to dash him now,) while White Rattlesnake is fighting like a demon, wielding his clubbed rifle with great skill and ease, felling down savages on the right and on the left of him, and doing all that mortal man could do for his freedom.

But numercial superiorty prevail at last, and the gallant, dashing, brave, impetuous White Rattlesnake is borne under a dozen razor-edged hatchets to the earth—a prisoner.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN PURSUIT OF THE BANDITS—BOWIE-KNIFING AN INDIAN—STARKE'S OPINION OF INDIAN PONIES

STARKE and his band of cutthroats had flown like the lightning across the open praries, from the scene of the sudden attack, and lightning arrow's unexpected disaster.

When the Indians came up, they found their chief

weltering in his blood, and sent yells of rage and vengeance after the fugitives.

But they had suffered too much to be baulked thus. Many of their number strewed the mouth of the canyon with their bloody corpse, while others again were badly, if not fatally wounded.

"What was to be done under the circumstances?"

This was the question of one of the renegade whites, who had joined the band of savages through motions best known to himself. He spoke in the Sioux dialect.

Ay, what was to be done.

The braves passed and repassed this query through their minds for several seconds.

Soon they had arrived at a conclusion, and a simultaneous one too, at that.

They could yet hear the muffled ringing of the horses hoofs, of the fugitive robbers, as they dashed on through through the darkness, to their mountain fastness.

"Pursue them!—pursue them!" rung out on all sides, in the language of the Sioux.

The cry was taken up, and re-echoed again and again from one to the other of the fierce savages, until a great shout thundered through the night, black and dismal as it was, and went rolling past the gloom, in the tracks of the banditti!"

The Indians gazed sadly on their young chief's bleeding form for a few moments, and as they did this, many a threat of vengeance was muttered between their clenched teeth, and many a tightly closed fist was shaken in the direction whence Starke and his band had fled.

After a short and rapid consultation, (for they had all assembled around the insensible Lightning Arrow), they left the chief in care o a couple o the oldest warriors of the tribe, while they themselves rushed forward to where they had secured their wiry ponies—a little way from the mouth of the Canyon—and mounting them with the utmost possible despatch, they galloped off like the whirlwind in pursuit, yelling like devils, and firing as they bounded along.

Now, as a general rule, Indians observe the utmost stealth, when in pursuit of any one; but when some tribes have a numerical superiority over the flying enemy, these distinguishing traits a e lost in them. They follow the tracks of their victims with mad yells, apparently heedless of consequences, sometimes firing pistols or rifles, if they have them in their possession.

The renegade white man was perhaps the madest of the party in the chase. He shouted himself hoarse, flourished his tomahawk above his head, as if he was really at that moment, spilling some one's blood, and urged the savages on to a break-neck pace, by voice and jesture.

This headlong riding was continued for upwards of a half an hour—the Indians following the trail very closely, even in the darkness.

Nor had the bandits ridden so quickly as to leave them far in the rear; for now the sombrous outlines of their jolting figures, were plainly visible to the eagle eyes of their pursuers.

Still the renegade urged the Indians on; and at last it became so that there was little prospect of an escape of the robbers from the pursuing party.

And while this exciting chase is wearing a livelier a more terrible hue, we take up the thread of our story, from where the Starke men had succeeded in cutting their way through the ranks of their savage assailants.

The captain was in front, and greeted the success of his daring with a loud ringing huzza, to which the bandits responded in one that made the prairie echo again.

He almost regretted next moment his imprudence. Having his head turned in another direction, while he uttered his cry of triumph, and abating the speed of his horse at the same time, he did not see the burly Indian that, as it were, leaped from the bowels of the earth, and next moment nearly hurled him from his saddle.

He turned with a quick. sharp cry, as he found his hand—the one in which he held the reins—grasped in a grip of iron, and a fierce savage with a blood-reeking hatchet, aiming a murderous blow at his head.

So sudden had this terrible apparition come upon him, that he almost shrieked from the very terror, the situation inspired him with.

But Starke, villain as he was, was not to die thus.

In a moment there was a revulsion from this sudden fear, to an indomitable and reckless bravery.

Whiz! went the hatchet through the murk of early morning. Even in the grim darkness the captain could see it flash and quiver, and had it come down it would have cloven his skull to the chin. Scarce had he heard the whizzing sound, when his arm was up like lightning. He had caught the Indian's wrist in his extricated hand. The blow intended for him fell short, and this saved his life.

At this juncture, Starke slid from his horse, still retaining a vice like grip on the Indian's wrist, and grappled with him. They both rolled over and over on the damp prairie grass, each struggling for an advantage over the other.

The savage, as we have before hinted, was no mean antagonist, for any man to meet. Captain Starke discovered this before he had been engaged with him two minutes.

For writhe and twist as he would, he found the Indian equal to him in strength, and superior to him in agility.

Thus they rolled over and over, the captain vainly endeavoring to draw his huge bowie knife, and by one swift and sudden blow dispatched his enemy.

It was at this moment that Reginald Barry rode back, and leaping from his horse rolled the burly Indian from his captain, giving the latter a chance to draw his deadly weapon.

Shortly after the savage received his death-wound, and fell back a corpse.

Starke coolly brushed the heavy beads of perspiration from his forehead, and wiping the huge drops of gore that dripped from his knife, among the short grass blades, he sent it into its sheath, with a sharp ring, and the next moment mounted, as did Reginald Barry, though not

without a shudder of horror, as he looked back upon the bleeding body of the lifeless Indian.

Without making more than a trevial remark on the result of the encounter, they rode with whip and spur after their comrades.

But they had not proceeded far when they heard the sudden yells of the Indians breaking through the stillness of the night.

After a brief interval the yells were repeated, and they knew now that they were pursued.

A short time after they could distinctedly hear the tramp of Indian ponies, as these sure-footed animals came tearing along after them.

"Thunder of heaven!" exclaimed Captain Starke with a horrible oath, "if the red skunks ain't coming after us like a streak of greased lightning. Curse their Indian ponies, say I. They can beat us in a long chase that's certain; but for the distance that we have to go, I have no fear for the result. Eh, Barry my boy?"

"I don't know about that, either," said Barry rather dryly. "I don't know about that either. However, it's best to be on the safest side of the hedge, if only for convenience sake. Let us push our nags as quick as they will go; for if we don't, we'll have a tough time of it with those chirruping devils in rear of us."

"You fancy so," grinned Captain Starke with a malisious smile.

"To be sure I fancy so," replied Reginald brusquely.

He was about to say something more, when a terrific yelling rung like the voice of a hundred demons rung in his ears.

That wild yell—the combined efforts of at least thirty savages—sounded much nearer now than when they heard the voices first. The savages were evidently in close pursuit and nearing them each instant.

"What do you think of that?" asked Reginald, quietly.

"Well, I should say it was about time we were 'putting' if we have any desire to save our scalps," returned

the captain. "And it convinces me," he continued, "that Indian ponies are not such despicable objects even in a short race. Let us put our animals to their metal, and ride as if the very devil was after us in a thunder shower."

"Humph!" muttered the educated outlaw as much as to say, "that wouldn't be very hard for the captain to do at any rate."

CHAPTER IX

A STRANGE PROCEEDING—THE REVELATION—DEATH OF SNAKE-EYE.

THE yells rang out again louder and more angry than ever.

The savages were evidently gaining more and more upon them.

"Yell away, you red devils!" screamed Starke through the darkness, "yell away, and be hanged to you!"

The Indians must have heard this wild retort, for the next minute they replied with fierce war-whoops, mingled with the most fearful and unearthly shrieks that the mind of a civilized being could ever conceive of.

The loud and alarming cries broke threateningly through the murk; but they fell on unheeding ears, when they fell on Captain Starke's.

"Oh, if that's all the harm they are going to do," he said, "I can stand it for a month, and be none the worse for it."

However bravely he had spoken in this respect, he took good care to keep the savages at a respectful dis-

tance. He applied whip and spur until his horse fairly flew under him.

Nor was Reginald Barry less discreet in this respect. He was determined if possible to increase the distance between himself and the Indians. And to make assurance doubly sure he used spur and whip, until his animal almost traveled over the ground like a streak of lightning.

But still the savages continued yelling and hurling threats of vengeance from their hoarse throats.

And among them all, Barry, the outlaw could hear one swearing in pure Anglo-Saxon, the tones of whose voice brought a dark recollection to his memory and a bitter pang to his heart.

The sound of this one voice made his brow darken, and as he whirled through the darkness he kept muttering—"it cannot be him—Oh, God! no, it cannot be him!"

But then the voice would strike his ear again, and summon up memories from the dark past, that had better have lain buried there, for his part,

And still he kept muttering—"it cannot be him; oh, God! no, it cannot be him!"

And what had this strange voice to do with the outlaw?

We shall see presently.

On went Captain Starke as before, flying at a terrible rate over the prairie.

Little did he dream but that his follower was behind him urging his horse to its utmost speed.

But strange to say Reginald Barry brought his animal to a sudden stand still.

Now this would have been sheer madness had he not some mysterious object in view.

There he sat motionless on his horse brooding, brooding; ay, brooding very deeply over something.

The rushing breezes bore the yells of the savages startlingly on his ear. Their infuriated cries seemed to have aroused him from his lethargy. Next moment he reined his horse's head around, and canteered off as it were to meet his pursuers.

This was a dangerous and daring proceeding. He knew it, but he had weighed the responsibilities and accepted the issue. The worst that could come of it was death; and brave man as he was he feared it not.

Death would have, indeed, been welcome many a time to him.

He sought it, but it came not, and he was still, alas! doomed to remain sometime among robbers and assassin.

His meditations were interrupted rather rudely by the arrival of the infuriated Siouxs', who near bore him down in their fierce gallop.

Seeing the obstruction of a man on horseback in their path and judging him to be one of the bandits, four or five of the nearest braves dismounted and rushed upon him with fierce yells and brandishing their tomahawks dangerously above his head.

It would appear from the frantic cries of the Indians that, his last hour had come; but in the height of his extremity he called out in the Sioux language that he was come there of his own free will to lead them to the fastnesses of the banditti.

These words were loud enough for the renegade to hear, and dismounting, he immediately approached the spot, commanding the savages to desist.

It appear that this semi-savage had some authority among his companions. In fact he was sub-chief of the tribe.

They immediately ceased their onslaught, but not before they had dragged him from his horse.

"Well, and what have you to say for yourself?" demanded the renegade, approaching him even closer.

"Have you not heard?" rung back the voice of the educated outlaw. "I come here to give you information, so you may avenge yourselves upon the red banditti."

"How know we that all this is true?"

"I can prove it to you, if you are not afraid of riding on with me a little way."

"Afraid!" echoed the renegade, contemptuously, "Afraid of you—the villain must be mad. Come; I'll show you that Snake-Eye is not so easily terrified."

The savages approved of their sub-chief's conduct, by a loud burst of applause.

"Mount your horse, knave," commanded the renegade.

Reginald needed no second spur, for he was instantly in his saddle; and his eyes could be seen in the darkness, the savages would have concluded that therein burned a blaze of triumph.

Snake-Eye a moment after, was at his side, mounted on his wiry, Indian pony.

The sub-chief having given some directions in the guttural Sioux dialect, cantered ahead by the side of the banditti.

When they had galloped to some distance, and left the savages both out of sight and hearing, Snake-Eye reined his pony in and commanded Reginald to halt.

This the latter did in his usual cool and quite way.

"And now," said Snake-Eye, impatiently, "what have you to communicate, that you have taken me so far from my comrades. Be in haste, for we have very little time to waste."

"This!" cried the other, emphatically. A strange glitter could be seen at the moment flashing from his eyes in the darkness. He must have been intensely excited. He held the cold muzzle of a revolver close to the renegade's temple. "This!" he repeated. "Drop your arms, or by the living God, I'll send your beastly soul out of your cursed carcase, in less than no time."

The renegade so suddenly taken back, regarded him in speechless horror. Then he almost shrieked out—

"Heavens! You wouldn't murder me, would you?"

"Murder you! Oh, no—not murder you!" laughed the other, mockingly. "But if you don't drop your arms before I count ten, I'll put a bullet through you, that's all. Now for it—One!"

Hardly had the word rung out, when the semi-savage dropped his tomahawk with a cry of mingled disappointment and rage.

"That's not all you have," said Reginald, fiercely—two!"

A knife rattled after the hatchet, and sent a low-clanging noise through the sweeping breezes that brushed past.

"Come, don't play any of your child's tricks on me," said the bandit, in a savage tone, still holding the revolver at his head, "for I assure you, I'm in no mood to be trifled with this night—three!—four!—five!——"

"Hold!" interrupted the renegade tremblingly; "for God's sake, take your pistol from my head! I notice your finger on the trigger—It's trembling, trembling! Take it away, I implore you! There—there—that is all I have."

And with this he sent his only remaining weapon—a revolver—flying after the rest. He had it concealed about his person, as a *dernier resort*, if matters came to their worst. Thus the villain was foiled and placed completely in the power of his enemy.

"You did well," said Barry, "to obey me; but I haven't done with you even yet. Canter a little ahead of me. Beware! The first cry of alarm you utter, I'll shoot you with as little compunction as I would a mad-dog."

There was something in the bandit's tones that admitted of no dispute.

His words sent the cold chill of death to the renegade's heart. He complied with the commands, though with a very poor grace, and cantered ahead of his captor—for he virtually considered him as such now.

He might have proceeded a half a mile or so along the prairie when the bandit in a stern voice bade him halt—and halt he did, without a murmur.

"Do you know why I have brought you here?" asked Reginald, in a strange unnatural tone, sweeping his eyes through the darkness over the trembling form of the renegade. "Do you know why I have brought you here?" he repeated.

All this time the ominous click of his revolver rung out with a death-like rattle through the black night, or

rather morning; for now it couldn't be very far from the leaden-gray of dawn, which must break at half-past three along the low-browed horizon.

"No," answered the renegade sullenly. "How can I tell, what you brought me here for, unless you intend murdering me."

The bandit laughed hoarsely at the fears of his captive. He seemed to enjoy it as a huge joke, but not so to Snake-Eye, who trembled in every firbre of his painted body, until it became almost an agony to look upon him.

"Cowardly, cowering wretch!" muttered Reginald Barry; but he calmed his indignation, and addressed the renegade in a grave and almost sorrowful tone:

"It is plain," he said, "that you don't know why I brought you here. I will tell you: It is not a very long story—it's a story of trial and sorrow—of desertion—of death!"

"But this doesn't concern me," answered Snake-Eye, in a quivering voice. "We are strangers. What good will the relation of all this be to me? I don't want to hear of desertion and death or anything of the kind. For heaven's sake, let me proceed to my comrades—they'll be so anxous just now about me that they'll be galloping in quest of us."

"And by the eternal they had better not for your sake!" said the bandit resolutely—"they had better not," he hissed, "if they want to renew the term of your lease on this earth; for I swear to you, the moment they come up, you die!"

There was something exceedingly dangerous now in the tones of Barry's voice; but what could the renegade do?—he only groaned aloud in his agony, and cursed his misfortune for being such a fool as to accompany this man in the first place. He tried to solve the whys and wherefores of his captor's strange conduct. But do all he could he couldn't strike the key note of design.

"He must be a mad man," laughed the renegade gloomily. "My only hope is in humoring him a little. I think we can make it all right yet. But curse his madness, if

he ever falls into my hands, I'll make an example of him," he ended with a bitter oath.

"So you have concluded to listen to my story," said Reginald Barry at length. "It's well for you, man, that you've come to that wise resolve; for if you had made a demur I'd have shot you in your tracks. You see I am a dangerous character," he added meaningly—"now listen to me—to my story," correcting himself. "It's only a short, simple one; but there's something in it for all that."

"Well, go on," said the renegade with returning confidence; "but for heaven's sake cut it short."

"Ah, indeed," said the bandit sneeringly, "so you'd like me to make quick work of it. As you will; and now for the story:

"Well, in a small village in one of the Eastern states, there was a sweet confiding little girl of my acquaintance named Butler—Mary Butler. You never heard of her, I suppose. Of course you didn't; why should I ask you?"

"He is out of his head, indeed," thought Snake-Eye. "I'll watch my opportunity and give him the slip presently. But hell and devils!" he muttered under his breath, "he still keeps that infernal pistol pointed at me as if he expected I was going to do something of the kind."

"As this pretty confiding little fawn Mary, was in her nineteenth summer," continued the bandit "and an heiress too at that, she had plenty of applicants for her hand. But she loved only one. It was a cousin of her own, and his name was John. Now listen to me, and pay attention to every word I utter.

"This John was a man of gentle heart—he was a young man—noble, generous, unselfish; but he was poor, like many other good and noble hearts before him.

"This was a crime in the eyes of the world; yes, man, do you hear, it's a crime to be poor—there's no forgiveness for the poor man, heaven help him! And this was

why Mary's father was averse to a union with his poor relation, who brought not the guinea stamp of wealth with him.

"So one day poor John was sent for and told to discontinue his visits, for said the banker:

"'You know you are too poor to support a wife like Mary. If you get money enough you can have her and welcome.'

"From that moment John resolved to become a wealthy man.

"He was not long either in determining his future course.

"In the evening the lovers met. But John's conduct was strange that night. A certain mournful expression in his face, smote her with a fear of coming evil.

"'Why are you so down-hearted to-night, John?' she said with one of her rippling laughs.

"But John answered not—he only grew sadder as he looked into those sweet eyes.

"'The bitter, bitter parting,' he said at last pressing her gentle hand fondly to him. 'I don't know how I'll ever bring myself to part with you, Mary. 'Alas! why was I not rich.'

"For mercy's sake, John, explain" was all the poor girl was able to say. Her heart had sunk within her at the mere mention of parting. She knew not what to think, or what to say.

"Then the man she loved apparently as dear as she did her life related in a trembling voice what the banker expected from the man who should marry his daughter, and finally his resolve to court fortune in another land."

"But what has all this to do with me?" said the renegade, Snake-Eye, interrupting him; for he had begun to grow very impatient, and was in terror of his life of the Indians approach. He realized what the consequence would be, if the turn of matters should prove so fortunate.

"Keep still!" cried the bandit sternly. "I want none of your interruptions, I must tell you this story, if the

heavens and earth should fall. Beware! how you interrupt me again!" Here the renegade heard the sharp click of the other's revolver. He said nothing more after this, but waited in an agony of despair for the continuation of a story which now seemed to touch his feelings unpleasantly.

"Now,' went on the bandit, "the poor girl wept like a little child at the turn of their fortunes; yet she was willing to give this John—this young man who was so poor, so honest so unselfish in his great love for her—grace to remove the one obstacle to their common happiness.

"And that night they parted with a renewal of their vows of constancy."

Here the robber paused and looked sternly at the cowardly trembling wretch before him. But it was only a moment, and then he continued:

"The new year came on and faithful John was still delving for fickle fortune in the gulches and gold 'leads' of California. His letters only spoke of a moderate success, for John was not the man to lie under any circumstance.

"About this time there visited the house of the banker the son of a friend. He was a heir to immense wealth. Just the thing that suited the rich man.

"His delicate attentions to Mary with his graceful and winning ways, were not lost on the father, who was desirous, mostly on account of the wealth, that it should culminate in a speedy marriage."

Here the renegade began to exhibit intense uneasiness; but the revolver of the bandit proved a good persuader to a quiet of even an intense kind.

He went on:

"With this object in view he brought them oftener together and that with a success that must eventually crown his most ardent hopes.

"In the entrancing presence of the rich man's son, Mary soon forgot her vows to poor John, and even ceased writing to him altogether.

"Then came the panic of '57 and the banker was a ruined man.

"But a severer blow was to fall on his aged head than this—the ruin of his only child."

At this point of the relation, Snake Eye exhibited the greatest uneasiness. But that ominous revolver would click and he was again quiet. It was the quietness born of agonized despair. Oh, how many times he wished that the earth would swallow him during this recital. It was heaping the agonies of the damned already on his burning soul. But the other continued, and at every time grew more dangerous; at least in the eyes of his listener.

"However honorable the intentions of the wealthy suitor might have been at first," said Barry, with some excitement, "we're now, curse him! in the father's ruin of a different cast.

"He soon accomplished his wicked designs, leaving the victim of his perfidy to sink into an untimely grave." 'She died," added the bandit bitterly, "in giving birth to the offspring of her shame—died miserably, calling on John to forgive her; and those to whom she had been kind in her prosperity, erected a simple grave stone at her head, with her name and age, and that was all.

"The bitterness of this last blow drove the father to a madhouse, to end his declining years in misery and wretchedness.

"The spring came and the flowers bloomed over the humble grave of poor Mary; and there was one that came from a far-off land—a rough and weather-beaten man, but with as honest a heart as ever beat in man's body. This man in the whole soul of his loving nature, nurtured the little guardians of that lonely sepulchre as if they were things of life.

"It was honest John Barry who had come to bury his heart where his Mary slept, in the peace of that flower-covered mound.

"Then the quiet villagers saw the strange man no more.

"Are you listening?" demanded the bandit sternly. Do you hear what I have said?"

"Yes," faintly responded the renegade, "but for mercy's

sake," he added tremblingly, "cut it short, I know you not, nor do I know this wretched woman."

"Liar!" shrieked the bandit—"doubly accurst liar! But you shall hear me out!—You shall hear me out, if there were a hundred howling savages at your back. Ay by heavens!"

He paused for a moment as if to collect himself.

And it was a very noticeable thing that he never took his eye off the renegade's scared countenance, but kept the revolver pointed deadly and unerringly at him.

"Five years were added to the past," continued Barry, at length, with a fierce look that made the other quail even in the darkness, "yes five long, weary years were added to the past, and mark the change!

"The libertine millionaire was a ruined man, a fugitive from an outraged justice.

"He had gone on in a course of dissipation since his base act and never thriving in any speculation he undertook, at length squandered his splendid fortune.

"He even went further than that in the heat of passion, and took the life of a companion of his iniquity, and was forced to fly to save his own.

"But there was a more unforgiving and deadly enemy on his track than the bloodhounds of justice, and what was worse unsuspected by him.

"One night as he sat dreamily watching the burning ember of his log fire, bitterly brooding over the past, his reverie was disturbed by a feeble knock at the door of his miserable hovel.

"Starting in alarm to his feet, he listened breathlessly."

Here Snake-Eye, the renegade, groaned deeply. It was easy to see that he was suffering indescribable torments.

"Yes, he listened breathlessly," continued the bandit. "not daring to move until the summons was repeated; then he peeped through a chink in the battered wall, and saw in the hazy moonlight, an old waywornman leaning on a staff.

"'I will admit him,' he may have thought, 'only for company's sake, I fear to pass these long dreary nights in solitude.' And well the villain might.

"He however, drew back the bolts and opened wide the door.

"'Come in, whoever you are,' he said.

"The old man slowly entered.

"'Take a seat,' he said again. 'I seldom have visitors; but you are welcome.'

"Perhaps you fear——"

"'It matters not,' the millionaire answered surlily; 'do as I command, and hold your peace!'

"'Ah! Roger Patchmore—villain! you cannot escape me now!" screamed the old man

"Roger Patchmore!" almost shrieked Snake-Eye—"Roger Patchmore," he repeated all of a tremble, his teeth chattering in his head.

"Ay Roger Patchmore!" cried Reginald Barry with a meaning in his voice, that the other may have faintly understood. "You know him then?"

"Not I," returned the renegade evasively; "I know no such person."

"'Tis well. But hear me out.

"At the mention of his name the wretch of wretches cowered like abject dog he was, trembling, almost begging for his very life. This seeming old man threw aside his dignity, and there stood John Barry with a deadly light beaming in his eye.

"'Mercy!' gasped the trembling wretch.

"'No, never from me,' came the cold reply from honest John Barry; 'ask it of God. You didn't show Mary mercy when you gave her poor frail body to an untimely grave, did you? then expect none from me. Make your peace with that heaven whose innocence you have outraged, for your moments on earth are numbered.'

"Then came a deadly pause.

"'Pray man,' said John in a resolute voice.

"A sudden rush was the answer, a ringing report, and John fell a second victim to this crime-stained wretch,

"But there was a young brother—one Reginald Barry—on the track of the guilty ruffians.

"He arrived at the hovel to find poor John dying. And it was from his lips that he learned the full particulars of this tragic occurrence. He had his eye on the villain Patchmore years before. But now his loved brother was past all recovery, he vowed before heaven never to rest day nor night until he had brought his murderer to justice."

"And again I ask what is that to me?' demanded the trembling Snake-Eye—"I know no one of that name, I swear it."

"Then hear me out," said Reginald Barry, "he hunted this Roger Patchman for four years—ceased not day nor night in the performance of the task he allotted himself, and was nearly coming upon him when he heard of his sudden death——"

"Ah!" interrupted the renegade breathing more freely,

"But to-night, to-night," went on the bandit in much excitement, "convinces this brother that he still lives!"

At this announcement Snake-Eye gave way to a deep and despairing groan and glared around him like a wild beast. He knew that it was all up with him now if he didn't make a determined effort for escape.

That wild despairing look was enough for Reginald Barry. He did not wish to throw himself into any useless danger. The murderer of his brother was in his hands, and he had sworn his death.

"Yes!" he yelled jumping from his horse and leaping upon him like a tiger; "behold! Roger Patchmore!—murderer of John Barry!—renegade!—villain! behold him who has sworn your life!—Reginald Barry."

There was a solitary report ringing through the dank, dawn air, and the renegade, Snake-Eye, with a terrific death scream threw up his hands wildly, fell from his horse, and was dead.

The banditti had sent the deadly bullet through his heart.

He was dead, and all his crimes had fled with him.

Now it happened that the savages were very much alarmed at their sub-chief's protracted stay.

They after a time went in quest of him, as a matter of course, and just had reached a spot some two hundred yards in rear of their commander, when they were startled by the loud ringing of a pistol shot.

Barry had only time to mount and dig spurs into his horse, when the Indians on their ponies, came clattering to the spot.

They were not long in ignorance of what had transpired, and seeing the bandit's blackened figure flying on horseback through the darkness, they gave it instant chase, yelling in his tracks like a pack of wolves.

We, however, leave him in his flying course for the present, and return to the gallant resistance which White Rattlesnake made against his numerous foes, the Dacotahs.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTURED—THE CHIEF OF THE DACOTAHS.

We left White Rattlesnake struggling desperately against the savages; but superiority of numbers had borne him to the earth.

Indeed, it was with diffculty that the chief could prevent them from taking his life on the spot, for every blow aimed seemed to be a death one to the fearless and gallant trapper, but he took all in good part, and even laughed with scorn at his enemies.

"You have me now haven't you?" he said, "Oh, yes, truly you have me. But we'll see how long you'll keep me.

You'd be surprised now if I'd get away from you in the course of the next twenty-four hours. Ha ! ha ! ha !"

"Laugh away, pale-face," said the chief sneeringly—"next comes our turn; for we intend roasting you."

"How kind of you to tell me," said White Rattlesnake with deep irony. "Are they all so kind in your part of the country, as to warn a poor fellow of his coming end?"

It was the savages turn now to laugh. He thought it a huge joke for a man to be enjoying the prospect of so terrible a death. In fact the chief was a renegade white, of French descent, who commenced life as a trader, but finally renounced all, for the position he now held among the Dacot hs, which was neither more nor less than a sub-chieftainship.

This chief of French descent was a cruel, cra ty, malicious man, and made his name a terror wherever he appeared. He was never known to show mercy when an unfortunate white man fell into his hands. He was stern and unrelenting in his hates; and f r his friendship even kindred spirits didn't care as it was always hollow and deceptiug

"Well, we'll warm you to-morrow, any way," he said grinning in White Rattlesnake's face. "And if you expect twenty-four hours to effect your escape in, you'll be sadly disappointed. I can tell you. To-morrow you die.

"Couldn't you make it ten now to oblige me," cooly replied the trapper. "Come now ther's a good fellow, make it ten if you please—after breakfast you know, when a fellow can meet his latter end without a tremble. Its so unpleasant to die on an empty stomach; and an hour here or there, is nothing to no one."

All this was said very banteringly; but perhaps the renegade couldn't see it for he replied angrily.———

"I'l see you hanged first! do you hear that?"

But not waiting for a reply he sauntered over to his other prisoner, Wilford Devereux.

The young man was bound and prostrate. He had made a feeble resistance. He was very weak from the loss of blood, caused by his wound—the wound dealt him by the murderous rifle of Captain Starke. It would be hard to tell how he felt just then. Thoughts of his sister Adele, came flashing

through his heated brain, and at such times he felt that he could go mad—starkly, raving mad.

Poor fellow, he was in an unenviable position enough. He lay bound there, unable to move a limb, or utter a sylable from the very anguish that wrung his heart-strings.

The savages did not flock around him as they did White Rattle-snake.

He seemed more an object of compassion to them than anything else.

They had, however, secured his fire-arms, and were examining them in the darkness They seemed well pleased with them. One fellow went as far as to stick them in a leather belt that he had around his waist. But Wilford's mind was too much engrossed with his own misfortunes to take notice of this. He looked up as the chief came along and snarled in his face.

"We are going to burn your companion at the stake, to-morrow. He's fine and fat. We are going to melt a little of the grease out of him. You are reserved for some future occasion, so you had better look out for yourself. Above all, give no trouble, and things may come off presently, a little better than you expect, especially as you look a likely young fellow, and wouldn't by any means make a bad brave."

The young man shuddered in every fibre of his frame at this information.

Roast the brave trapper, White Rattlesnake—burn his poor body by inches?

"Oh, God! what a dreadful fate," he moaned, and I am the cause of it—I am the cause of it! Alas! Adele!"

The renegade chief seemed to read his very thoughts, for the next moment, he said:

"Hold up your head, man! Are you already grieving the anticipated death of this comrade of yours. Bah, fool, are you not aware that self-preservation is the first law of nature. Never mind what becomes of him, so you're saved yourself, at least, for the present. Eh? what?"

But Wilford never answered him.

He was too much engrossed with his own bitter thoughts.

The chief looked at him again for a moment, and muttering a contemptuous "bah!" passed on, giving directions to his men in the tongue of the Dacotah, as he did so.

We shall soon see what those directions were.

Meanwhile, the savages had secured the rifle of White Rattlesnake, and as the early dawn was breaking through the clouds, they were yet surveying it in rapt wonder.

The shining silver rattlesnake was the first thing that rivetted their attention.

They were loud in their murmurs of gratification in taking so handsome and remarkable a prize.

"Surely," they said among themselves, and in their own dialect, "this must be the celebrated White Rattlesnake himself, of whom we've heard so much, and know so little."

They might not have said it in the exact words, herein transcribed, but, however, was the sum and substance of what they did say.

During the temporary excitement, up came the chief.

He demanded immediately what all the row was about.

"White Rattlesnake—White Rattlesnake!" rung a dozen voices.

The chief was astounded at the information and asked for the proofs.

The rifle was shown him with its silver embossed rattlesnake.

The trapper seemed to enjoy this nameless astonishment and terror that his name seemed to convey among the savages.

"So you are White Rattlesnake, are you?" queried the chief approaching his white prisoner with greater caution than ever and with an apparent dread that the bound trapper would burst his bonds. "So you are White Rattlesnake, are you?" he repeated.

"I am," was the cool, quiet rejoinder of the noted Indian slayer.

"You have more surely spoken the words that now have sealed your death warrant." said the chief with a fiendish chuckle. "There might have been a chance before for you; but not now—not now," he repeated slowly. "To-morrow at eleven you die."

"Make not sure of that," said White Rattlesnake. "'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip' you know. Before that time you and I may have changed places. There's more likely things than that happen every day."

CHAPTER XI.

WHITE RATTLESNAKE'S COUP DE GRACE.

THE renegade chief did not deign a reply to this, but casting a look of mingled fear and hate on the brave hunter, turned on his heel.

The leaden gray of dawn had now broken in earnest through the ragged clouds that dotted the eastern horizon, and to a great extent the breeze had abated, allowing the mantle of comparative calm to fall over the broad flat prairie lands.

Shortly the ridges of threatening clouds had swept away and every thing pretended well for the morning—the morning that was to witness the horrible death of White Rattlesnake.

During all this time the renegade chief of the Dacotahs had not been idle. He had his wounded seen to, and a great hole dug for the burial of his dead, which office was performed amidst the loud lamentations of the remaining Indians.

After this had been satisfactorily performed, the order was given to march back to the encampment; not, however, before they had secured their wiry ponies, which they immediately mounted.

The prisoners were placed bound as they were upon their own horses.

This done, the savages surrounded them, and the whole body proceeded off at a brisk canter, in an opposite direction to that which Captain Starke and his band of cutthroats had taken.

During the journey Wilford was more dead than alive He said very little, and appeared to have reached the zenith of despair. His thoughts—painful enough—were more for Adele than himself. To think that his beloved sister, had fallen into such hands, and partly through his own self-willed and obstinate course—oh, it was maddening!

White Rattlesnake did his best to cheer him up and and had many a pleasant word and kind smile for him on the journey. But it was to no purpose. He couldn't get over the thought of his hapless sister, and the probabilities of her fearful fate.

After this, nearly an hour had passed in ominous silence, if we except an occasional gutural remark from the lips of a savage, on the weather, mayhap some other trifling matter, that his comrades didn't care to answer.

At length morning broke, radiently beautiful. The sun was glinting up from behind the long ranges of hills that bordered the eastern horizon, and threw its golden arrows athwart the path the savages were then pursuing.

It gave promise of a glorious day, yet would it be terrible and oppressive before the noon sun crossed the meridian; and worst of all it was in July, that month of scorching heat, and to cap the climax it was the glorious Fourth—the anniversary of Independence—American Independence—dear to American heart the world over.

But scarce had the sun arisen from his mist's of the night before, when the band of Dacotahs halted suddenly in fron

of a thickly studded grove, where they had pitched their encampment.

A few old squaws and elderly braves came out from their wigwams to meet them, but when they saw their ranks so descimated—which they did at a glance, they gave vent to loud cries and lamentations: and indeed, it was with difficulty that they could be restrained from rushing upon the prisoners, and doing them some injury.

When the noise and turmoil of this sudden excitement had ceased, the prisoners were assisted to dismount, and each conducted to a separate tree on the edge of the grove and there securely bound; but they were not so far from each other, that they could not converse intelligibly, without raising their voices.

White Rattlesnake of course, whom the savages deemed their most inveterate enemy since his capture, was as nearly fronting the wigwams as he could possible be.

The Indians were still suspicious of the prowess of their noted captive, and had taken the precaution to bind him even more securely than his comrade.

White Rattlesnake only smiled with scorn at this.

"And so," said he to the chief, who had now approached him. "And so," he repeated, "you think you have me secure at last, eh? Ah, ha, ha! We shall see—we shall see. Oh, ho, my savage of the wilderness—my prince of renegades, how you will fume and tear when you hear of your humble servant's escape. It will be a sick joke to tell at the expense of a sub-chief of the Dacotahs."

"So you are thinking of escape already, are you?" sneered the renegade. "You like a man that could escape, don't you, bound and all as you are to that tree, and under the eyes of fifty of our bravest warriors. I tell you, you've lived too long—eleven o'clock sees the last of you, for we shall fizzle your bride well before the noon hour arrives. Do you understand me wretch?"

"Why not make it ten, good captain of a worthy tribe —cursed!—soulless!—white-livered spawn of a renegade!" spoke the hunter, in a voice of irony, deep and withering in its intonations.

By giving way to this contempt and bitterness, he had almost sacrificed his life This was more than the chief could stand. With a bitter oath, growled out in English, he snatched his tomahawk from his side, and flourishiug it rushed upon the helpless hunter, with the intention doubtless, in his sudden passion of slaying him where he stood.

Wilford saw the flashing of the deadly weapon in the sunlight, and gave up all hope for the life of his generous friend and brave preserver. He closed his eyes to shut the awful sight of his murder out.

But the trapper was not doomed to die just yet.

He had watched every movement of the renegade with an eagle eye, and had arrayed within his mind in a moment a system of defense.

Up came the sub-chief of the Dacotahs, fuming like some terrible beast of prey. He was half blinded with his own rage, and had resolved on the instant death of the captive.

The tomahawk flashes and whirls between his lithe fingers, making a hissing death-like noise, as it descends through the crisp balm of the morning air.

Down, down it comes, aimed for the devoted head of White Rattlesnake. There seems scarce a possibility of escape, the semi-savage has made sure of his prey.

The great hunter is alive to his danger, and already is he prepared to meet it. The moment has now arrived. Up comes his brawny, but well-formed leg, like a flash of electric light, and as the descending hatchet whizzes in line with his head, so does the stalwart body of the painted renegade come very close to him. He strikes out with all his force, and with a terrible kick hurls his would-be slayer, reeling to the earth.

The chief falls without a groan—either dead or senseless—and lays in a huddled mass, without move or motion.

What was passing strange, too, not one of the watchful savages saw the act. So much the better for the

trapper. And in the position in which he now lay, they could only conclude him asleep.

This would be a very natural supposition, considering the restlessness and activity of the previous night.

And furthermore, the savages seeing their chief there, would be less alert than previously, fancying, we presume, that he was watching and sleeping both. We here base our conclusions on the man who always slept with his eyes open, of whom all our readers must have heard.

When Wilford opened his eyes, he expected to see his friend and companion dead.

He was about crying out from very joy when he saw the reverse of his gloomy anticipations; but a quick, meaning look from White Rattlesnake, silenced him.

He would fain ask what part in leger demain his friend had performed, so as to have rendered the chief so harmless, as he lay there without apparent life, in the crisped grass of the prairie; but that look was sufficient, and he wisely concluded to hold his tongue. If there should be any talking done, White Rattlesnake could do it when he thought it safe. However, he rejoiced exceedingly, in the miraculous escape of his friend.

Shortly, there was a peculiar and very slight noise behind the tree, to which the trapper was bound. He knew well what that noise meant; but he dared not move for fear of attracting attention from the wigwams opposite.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ESCAPE AND PURSUIT.

AWAY sawed that strange, grating noise, slow, very slow, but sure.

Then it ceased all at once.

A moment after, Wilford felt and heard a rasping, slow, almost noiseless, sawing at his bonds.

He looked at White Rattlesnake, strangely enough, for an explanation.

The hunter's expressive face returned an answer, which he couldn't fail but understand.

Yes, he was being liberated. Thank God, for his mercies. He would soon be a free man.

By-and-by, the peculiar grating noise ceased altogether. But still the bonds held; yet they were only held by a couple of threads as it were.

Devereux thanked Providence again in the gratitude of his heart, and waited for the further action of his friend, the trapper.

At length the proper opportunity for escape came.

The Indians deeming their prisoners under the watchful surveillance of the chief, troubled their heads no further about them, but entered the wigwams to breakfast on anything there was left. This was what White Rattlesnake wanted. He leaned forward his body from the immense trunk of the tree, to which he was secured.

His bonds gave way with a thread-like crack. Next instant, he was free.

Wilford seeing this followed suit with a like result.

But White Rattlesnake was not done yet.

He darted noiselessly behind the trunk of a tree, to find two loaded revolvers and a knife in waiting for him.

These he quietly and cooly possessed himself of, with the air of a man who had expected them from the fire. He now secured all but one revolver in his belt; the latter he kept grasped firmly in his hand for sudden emergencies.

Need we say that poor Wilford looked upon these strange proceedings, of his mysterious friend, with much surprise, especially when he discovered the same kind of weapons behind his own tree. However, not waiting to express what was in his mind at the time he stooped down and picked them up.

The hunter's rifle, with its silver rattlesnake, polished and bright, reflecting in the sun, was some distance away, leaning against the trunk of a great elm.

Its owner forthwith resolved to possess himself of it. And with this intention he bounded with silent strides to the spot and secured the much coveted arm.

But he had unfortunately not escaped unobserved.

A prying savage looked through a rent in one of the wigwams by chance saw the hunter's gliding form. He therefore set up a great cry of alarm, which was echoed and reechoed from one end of the encampment to the other.

Every Indian rushed out with his gleaming hatchet cutting crochets in the golden sunbeams.

A few pistol shots were fired, then yells arose on all sides as they rushed pell-mell for the hunter and his companion.

At that moment a sharp, shrill voice broke high above the din created by the infuriated Indians. It seemed to come from the very heart of the grove.

"Fly!" called out the peculiarly startling voice. "Fly!" it repeated again, "by the old path through the centre of the grove. Near to the lightning river Cottenwood you'll find your horses!"

Even the savages had halted and listened in dismay to the unearthly tones which seemed to emanate from the depths of that forest of trees; but none of them could understand the purport of the words. They looked for their sub-chief. He was still sleeping, as they thought among the grass blades, near to the tree where their prisoners had been bound so lately.

Their state of indecision only lasted a moment however.

Again they rushed forward with loud ringing yells and flourishing tomahawks to recapture White Rattlesnake and his comrade.

Now from the first to the last this all transpired in less than a minute,

"Wilford, let us give them a parting volley," said the hunter in a rapid voice. "Are your revolvers all right? Now fire!"

White Rattlesnake's command rung loud and clear above the yellings of the maddened savages.

Crack! crack! crack! went three ear-dinning reports, and not waiting to see the result of their shooting, they darted off into the thick undergrowth of the grove.

On went the Indians in pursuit of them; but they were evidently unacquainted with the interminable intricacies, through which they forced their way, which clearly proves that even an Indian may be at fault sometimes.

White Rattlesnake on the contrary knew every square of ground in the grove. He had found it a means of escape more than once before from his enemies.

He had proceeded the first five minutes with astonishing rapidity through the most intricate paths of undergrowth and brush, followed closely, of course, by Wilford, who found out how easy it is to do a thing when one knows how.

The dense undergrowth is passed. They emerge into a path of wrinkled weeds and grass, and as bushes on either side grow to the height of several feet, it would be hard for the uninitiated to tell whether it was one or not, if he had passed close alongside of it.

When they had got thus far they could no longer hear the fierce yelling of the savages. Wilford thought they must have gone back as most probably they were unable to overcome the obstacles that lay in their path.

"That is indeed possible, my young friend," said White Rattlesnake; "for as you may see yourself, it's a devil of a hole to get through. And if I'm not mistaken—

and seldon I am in such matters— they have gone back and taken to horse for the purpose of intercepting us on this side of the grove. But we'll fool them in that I'm thinking."

They found it a much easier matter to travel rapidly alongside this path, than by forcing a way through the bushes as they were compelled to do at the outset.

"I have a question to put to you," said Wilford after a pause.

"Well put it then," said White Rattlesnake buresquely.

"Perhaps it may offend you," stammered the youth.

"No. What is it?"

"It seems to me that you can have a spirit at your elbow whenever you want it," replied Wilford promptly. "There are indeed, some very strange things come to light now-a-days. Pardon me, but are you a spiritualist?"

"No. Why do you ask me that?" said the trapper.

"Because I would fain unravel who the devil cut our bonds, if some spirit didn't do it?"

"Rest assured it was no spirit good bad, nor indifferent!" laughed the trapper. "Now, now, there's a good fellow, don't bother me any more with such siliness—when the proper time comes you shall see your liberator—this I promise. So if you have any further curiosity about the matter keep it to yourself for the present."

Wilford said no more after that; but pondered on what he still deemed a mystery of the intensest kind. Then the unfortunate Adele came in for a share of his speculative thoughts, and before they reached the verge of the grove, he induced the trapper to again promise, that he would immediately set out for the mountain fastness of the Red Banditti.

Eventually they reached the end of the path. A few strides more brought them out from the shadowing branches of the trees with their thickened foliage, into the clear and scorching sunlight; for the day was growing blistering in the heat; but notwithstanding there was a fine

breeze blowing, which more than compensated for the torrid flare of the sunbeams.

The coast was now clear as far as they could see, and they found their horses secured on the exact spot named by the shrill mysterious voice, which appeared to have come from the very heart of the grove.

The hunter now urged his young companion to mount, with the utmost dispatch, reasoning, and very solid too, that the savages must soon reach there. He was not very far out in thus concluding; for scarce were they in the saddle, when they heard a savage yell, then a loud ringing war-whoop.

White Rattlesnake's keen eye caught sight of a savage creeping along among the undergrowth and tall grasses.

He took no second thought, but bringing his rifle quick as lightning to the aim, fired.

There was a stunning report, followed by a piercing shriek. The hunter's rifle did its work well—the savage was dead.

Waiting to hear no more, but that scream of death, which assured him that he had sent another red fiend to the "happy hunting grounds," he bounded over the prairie like an arrow from a bow, followed by Wilford Devereux.

CHAPTER XIII.

ELUDING THEIR PUSUERS.

THE Dacotahs who had made the circuit of the grove on their wiry ponies thought by this means that they would be able to intercept the escaping prisoners; but in this they were, however, doomed to disappointment.

Little had they dreamed that the captured horses of White Rattlesnake and his companion, which they had left picketed some twenty or thirty paces within the grove would be there before them.

They were astounded as they saw the trapper and his comrade dash out from the shadow of the trees on the backs of the very horses they had thought secure enough in their possession.

But they were not so much dismayed that they couldn't give chase.

With loud yells and the discharging of many arrows, they followed in pursuit, hoping by the superior endurance of their ponies to finally run their former prisoners down.

White Rattlesnake saw that the chase was going to be a long and stern one; so instead of exhausting his horse too much, he let him go at a moderate speed, neither using spur nor whip.

Wilford Devereux followed the same course as his companion.

By this the sun had ascended high in the heavens.

Its burning heat on the prairie became intense and scorching; and the morning breezes were slowly dying away. The day was going to be a teazer, as White Rattlesnake expressed it; but it couldn't be no more helped than those cursed Indians following them and yelling like devils in their track.

But the hunter intended by no means to let them have it all their own way.

He would suddenly turn in his own saddle carry his rifle to his shoulder and fire upon the pursuers. At every shot fell a savage. The unerring aim of White Rattlesnake was unquestionable; and so the Indians thought before they had gone a dozen miles after him for ten of their bravest warriors had bit the dust, while the trapper at the same time took good care to keep out of their range of fire.

Wilford were it not for thoughts of Adele would have

enjoye the chase very much, seeing as they quite easily kept ahead of their savage enemies

It must have been verging on noon when the Indians became exasperated at this kind of warfare which brought them all the loss, and put in (if we be permitted to use an old trapper's expression) their "best licks" after those they were pursuing.

This somewhat accellerated White Rattlesnake's speed.

He fired his last shot bringing down an Indian as before, when he gave the order for Wilford to put his horse to its best speed.

This the young man did right gallantly

Away they went flying over the sizzling grasses of the prairie, through the burning heat, followed closely by the savages in their rear.

They must have traveled over two hours in this manner through the blaze and glitter of the sun. Wilford was ready to faint from the living flame that was showering down upon him, but he ground his teeth firmly together and resolved to die in the saddle rather than fall into the hands of the enemy again.

But when he looked around, no Indians were in sight, although there was a scope behind him of three miles of even prairie land.

In his heart of hearts he thanked God, and drew the attention of White Rattlesnake to the fact of the savages disappearance.

But that worthy was not at all ignorant of what Wilford wished to convey.

"I knew that an hour ago," he said. "There's a grove about hence, and as I see that you are about exhausted we'll make for it at once. If I recollect aright we had no breakfast."

"No," responded Devereux weakly, "but a snack now would be worth its weight in gold, for I feel as if I should fall from this horse."

"Do you think you can ride the two miles, my young friend?" queried White Rattlesnake.

"Yes, or I'll die in the attempt," replied Wilford resolutely.

"I am glad to hear you say that," said White Rattlesnake, "for there's nothing I admire more among our species, than a plucky whole-souled fellow. So let us journey ahead, and out of this blazing sun before it can do us any injury. In truth I feel about exhausted myself."

It took but a very brief interval to reach the grove before mentioned, where they at once dismounted.

Here the long tangled grass and vegetation was as dry as a burning sun could make it. They passed by this and entered the rather extensive wood. They must have passed at least a hundred paces, over brambles and briars and through dense undergrowth ere they paused before a stream of sparkling singing waters.

It was very narrow, and we believe the sight of the great continent, looming its vast mountain ranges from the depths of old ocean could not have given Columbus more delight than this fairy stream gave poor Wilford.

They were both choking with a thirst that even the trapper's "chain lightning," would not remedy, if he had it by him.

It would be hard to describe the mad haste with which they rushed for that little creek (after having first cautiously watered their horses) to think of their limped contents

The scene must have been a very ridiculous one, to one who had not this great prairie thirst to quench. And perhaps the burning sands of India couldn't furnish two better customers than White Rattlesnake and his companion just then.

But they, however, drank enough to satisfy them.

This done White Rattlesnake proceeded to the edge of the grove to cover up the tracks left by their horses. He had also another object in view, which was to procure a breakfast for two, which he did in less time than had allotted out to himself.

When he returned to the young man he had a great

chunck of jerked beef weighing from two to three pounds.

On this they breakfasted, while their jaded nags cropped the green herbage on the banks of the stream.

The other vegetation was almost burned to a crisp from the intollerable heat of the burning sun overhead.

"You need have no fear of the savages now, my young friend," said the trapper. "It's not likely that they'll trouble us any more with their presence—they have lost track of us for all their cunning, indeed have they."

"And when will we start for that villain Snake's retreat?" asked the youth; for never for a moment could he lose sight of his unfortunate sister's hapless condition. It was worrying him intensely.

"Before the coming of dusk I hope," answered the trapper. "Meanwhile we'll take a sleep under some shady tree."

Nature in both their cases, was thoroughly exhausted, and a sleep would as a consequence be essentially necessary.

They retired soon after away some paces from the stream, and planting themselves beneath one of the widest spreading trees in that minature forest, went calmly and quietly to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GROVE ON FIRE—NARROW ESCAPE FROM DEATH—WHITE RATTLESNAKE AGAIN.

NEVER dreamed these men of danger, when they were startled from a refreshing sleep by a loud crackling noise, and a great sheet of flame that sped around them with the speed of the whirlwind.

On, on it came roaring and crackling through the grasses and dried-up vegetation, lapping them up until the grove was one mass of seething, roaring flame.

They leaped to their feet with a loud cry. Their faces were pallid in the fiery glimmer of the rushing flames. They became chained for a moment to the spot anticipating the most horrible fate that the brain of man could conceive.

And now the long tongue of fire, reverberating like the distant thunder of a storm lap their clothing, and ascend through volumes of a stifling, suffocating smoke, into the very branches of the trees.

Another moment of such irresolution and they are lost.

Breaking the spell that bound him, Wilford rushed on through flame and smoke, dashing past obstructions which would seem impassible barriers in less exciting moments.

In their hurry to escape this terrible conflagration, even their horses were forgotten.

With a cry of desperation White Rattlesnake bounded after him; but they lost each other, for the trapper's voice grew fainter and fainter; at last ceased altogether.

On tore the wretched Wilford through the crackling and roaring masses, fighting and buffeting the brush and brambles which soon partook of the form of a great furnace of living fire.

On, on, he went. Thank heaven! the air becomes less stifling!

Cooler and purer it fans his fevered face, and now he has caught a faint of the burning sun overhead.

Fire and death keeps him still, or the hovering confines of death.

A fall down some rocky declivity—a sudden splash, and he became unconscious.

When he came to his senses he felt a cold shivering all over him. He tried to raise his hand to his face; but it fell splash into the water by his side.

He then opened his eyes. All he saw was a lurid darkness in the heavens.

Otherwise it was a dark, dark night, and the air was heavy with burning wood and smouldering grass. Then flashed upon poor Wilford the great danger he so miraculously escaped, and the probable horrible fate of the gallant hunter White Rattlesnake.

He closed his eyes now, and uttered a fervant prayer to God for his narrow escape from so heart sickening a fate.

The narrow stream he knew had saved his life. But the burning sensation of his face and hands, told him that he hadn't escaped scatheless. He was, indeed, thankful for God's mercy, yet even here he could not help reverting his mind to his sister Adele and his mysterious friend the hunter.

But dragging that weary night through as best he could, he waited the appearance of morning ere he dared to move a step.

At last it came bright and beautiful glowing over the little stream.

Observing the sun shining in the heavens he rose from his watery couch with difficulty, and shook the spray from his tattered garments; for now he could call them by no other name. However his attire just then didn't trouble him much for he was only too proud that he got away with his life.

When Wilford clambered up the walls of the stream, he caught a glimse of the summer sun. It was vivid and bright! and the refreshing breezes of early morning, were blowing over the late scene of fiery devastation deliciously.

Indeed he was pleased to greet old Sol, and did it courteously as his rays would permit him.

The next thing he looked for was the grove; but scarce a vestige of it was left. As for his firearms they went with the rest he supposed. Then again he hunted for the trapper's rifle until he was tired. Old Rip Van Winkles gun with its twenty years rest must have presented a very creditable appearance alongside of White Rattlesnake's—that is if he had found it, but hadn't. The idea now struck him that the trapper might have escaped even more fortunately than he had himself. Oh, in his heart how he wished this was so!

But he resolved to loiter around no longer, and being as it

was early morning, he'd make his way alone and unaided, in search of the villainous Stark and his band of ruffians. He was resolved at the hazard of his life to rescue his wretched sister.

With thoughts of gloomy foreboding he passed over two miles of the charred and blackened prairie, soon, however, he struck a part not touched by the storm of fire, where traveling became more pleasant.

But he was doomed here to meet another mishap.

Passing a grove his attention was attracted to its singular beauty. He stopped to admire the golden foliage and inhale the fragrance.

Suddenly there was a bellow, then a roar like distant thunder, and the next thing he saw was an infuriated buffalo bull coming like lightning towards him, with flame-eyes, erect mane, and tossing tail.

Young Devereux was alive to his danger in a moment, and was prepared to act as well as his tattered and broken down condition would permit him.

Having no weapons he quickly made up his mind to run for it, try and reach the grove if possible, and climb up some tree.

All this was, indeed, very easy to think of, but not so easy to put into execution.

Now the danger was of reaching the grove.

The bull was in front thundering over the intervening space between them. But a life and death struggle urged him on to almost superhuman efforts.

He had hit upon a plan in less than a moment.

On came the bull tearing behind him. Heavens! what a race! At every bound, he gains, till the unfortunate young man could almost feel its hot breath burning his neck. It is instant death if his plan miscarries.

Every sinew and nerve are strung in one desperate effort.

The supreme moment has come!—it's a leap for life! —it's done, and he has the maddened beast fast by the tail!

And heavens! what a breakneck they are going at.

It is heading for the grove, and Wilford holding on like grim death. His strength is failing him—one more fifty paces and he is gone!

At this moment a ringing shot breaks the stillness of the vast prairie—and another, and another still.

The bull slackens in his pace, and falls dead; while the terrible strain on Wilford renders him insensible.

When he returns to consciousness he sees the stalwarth form and handsome face of the trapper bent over him. Yes, White Rattlesnake still lives.

"Thank heaven!" murmurs Wilford, gratefully. "God bless you! dear friend, I am glad to see you here," he added with a gentle grasp of the other's broad palm. "Twice now have you saved my miserable life. Would to heaven the time had come that I might serve you as you have served me."

"And it will come, my friend, rest assured of it," said the trapper. "Something told me that you had escaped the terrible scorching of those flames, even as miraculously as myself. But come if you are able to rise, our horses awaits us."

"Horses!" exclaimed Wilford rising to his feet in astonishment. "You don't mean that?"

"Yes, but I do though," replied the trapper—"the animals got away long before the fire came on them, and I found them on the very edge of this grove, as it were waiting for us."

After a few more remarks, they had mounted. But they had not proceeded far, when they encountered forty or fifty hunters and trappers, scouring the country for the Red Bandits of the Yellowstone.

They soon explained their mission to them; and as White Rattlesnake volunteered to guide them to the robbers' mountain fastness, they started off in company, intending of course to attack the robbers, and if possible take them prisoners.

CHAPTER XV.

RUBE THE RATTLER—THE SKULL CANDLESTICK—ARRIVAL OF REGINALD BARRY.

THE trappers had submitted long enough to the system of plundering, instituted by this desperate set of ruffians, and for this reason, they had collected in force strong enough to attack the robbers in their stronghold.

It was admitted on all sides, to be a hazardous undertaking.

But with such a leader, as White Rattlesnake to take command, they had no fear for the success of their mission.

Wilford, too, met great favor before he had been two hours in the trappers company.

The story was told and retold, of the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of the infamous bandits, and the abduction of his only sister, together with his vow before heaven, to sacrifice life itself or effect her escape.

If the young man had been of a vain mind the admiring plaudits he had received just then from the forty or fifty stalwart trappers, would have turned his head completely. But he paid little or no attention to their encomiums, His thoughts were deeply engrossed in reflecting on the unhappy condition of the gentle Adele.

From these sorrowful reflections he was often roused, by the cherry voice of White Rattlesnake, who had always something encouraging to say, or a joke to crack at the expence of the robbers, and sometimes a trapper would become a butt for the general humor that bubbled up spontaneously every now and then.

Thus they journeyed on until noon was fast closing in upon them.

They had now got to the sloping banks of the Yellow-

stone; yet miles above the scene where Wilford had suffered his cruel mishap.

There, as they were within ten miles of the sturdy mountain ranges wherein the robbers lay in concealment, they deemed it advisable to halt for the present, and in the interval dispatch scouts to reconnoitre the enemy's position.

For this purpose three of the shrewdest and most experienced trappers in the party were dispatched.

White Rattlesnake would have fain gone too, but the dessenting voices of more than half the command left him no other alternative than to remain, as they deemed him more fitted to guard against surprise, than any other man in the party.

And while the scouts were away gleaning information of the robbers, their comrades threw themselves under the wide-spreading branches of a kingly oak resolving to await calmly the events that the cover of night might bring.

One of the command, a white-headed, but stalwart hunter, volunteered to a story, to enliven the time while their comrades were away.

As the breezes brushing the surface of the river were refreshing, and scarce a glinting of the sun darted through the oak leaves, they were well-satisfied to hear a story from the lips of the old hunter, who was known on the great western plains, as Reuben the Rattler.

"Go on, Reuben!" shouted a half score of the "boys." "for we'd be a kinder glad to hear a yarn from you, Reuben, knowin' ye so long, an' yet so little o' yer younger life, that whenever ye comes afore us, it's like a plateful o' cold hash or what they calls in boardin' houses—mystery; an'——"

"Clear the tables an' purceed with the story!" roared an impatient trapper; "who wants to know about yer cold hash?"

"Stash it!" cried another. "Let Rube go on, in his own kinder way—he's one o' the right kidney, he is; an

I'll warrant me he spins us a tough yarn as 'll reach from here to the Gulf, in less than no time."

"Order! in the chayney shop, while the Rattler purceeds!" sang trapper number one, through the whiffs of his pipe. "How's he a-go n' ter begin, unless he has partect silence. "Order, I say!"

Soon quiet was restored, and the trappers glanced at the kindly face of old Rube, in eager anticipation of his story.

The old man then cleared his throat as good story-tellers usually do, and begun his yarn in this wise:

"Wall, boys, I war young one time, in fact a bit of a kid not much higher nor yer waist-belt, when an old trapper tuck me under his pertection, an' swore ter become a second father to me.

"But why did he take this rash concloosion into his head? That was the question. Well, I'll tell ye.

"It 'pears as how I was stolen from home by the reds, when I war no more nor three year old.

"Guess the critters butchered my mother an' father, (fur I never saw them arter that) an' thinkin' that they hed a very good prize in their son, jist conclooded that they'd make a red varmint like 'emselves out o' me. God didn't put their nature in my heart for all that, and I grew up like other kids, with plenty o' metal; but generally as tame as a prairie hen in a snow-storm.

"When they said 'fight,' I fought, but always on the square up-and down principal. No bows an' arrers, tomahawks or scalpin' knives for me. I couldn't bear to look at 'em no more than I could go to a ranter's prayer meeting.

"Wall, when I war a servin' my apprenticeship to the savages, this old trapper came along one day a-tradin' with them, an' seein' I warn't in my nateral element took a talkin' to me.

"'Ye'll come with me,' sez he, 'an' I'll make a man out o' ye for the rest o' yer life?'

"'So I will,' sez I, glad indeed of the chance to go anywhere, so that I got away from the savages. 'But

what air the tarms?' I said again speakin' to him in a bizness point of view.

"'You're a dreadful kid,' sez he—'almighty sharp too for a savage that has no cultiwation; an' one o' these days ef you foller in my steps,' sez he, 'ye'll turn out to be a great man.'

"Stash that,' sez I, 'yer only a-foolin' a feller. But come to the tarms,' said I impatiently again, 'an' we'll settle the difficulty on the spot.'

"'Now by the jumping Jerusalem!' sez he, "you're jist the chap as suits my carawan. What do ye say to comin' apprentice to me—mind there's plenty to eat drink an' wear an' a quarter in yer pocket on a Sunday mornin'. Is it a bargain,' s z he.

"'It is,' sez I. 'But how am I goin' to stand it?'

"'Can you run?' sez he.

"'Yes.' sez I.

"'Fast?' sez he.

"'Sartinly, Sir.' sez I, 'with any red skunk among 'em, if it comes to that.'

"Good. You know where my campin' ground is,' sez he. 'Come to me at midnight, an' be sure you bring no wisitors with you, for I abominably hate 'em after dark.'

"I promised, we parted, and that night I paid him a sly kind of a visit, which might have lasted to this blessed day, only that the poor old fellow died. However, now that I'm at it, I'll tell you the secret of his life; an' it's no common one either, between you and me. Without goin' any further, I'll title it the

SKULL CANDELSTICK.

"I sat alone one night by our camp-fire, the old trapper had gone to hunt for something to eat.

"I was very gloomy an' very hungry, an' so you would have been comrades, had you been in my place watching that bleached skull candle-tick, sheddin' an unearthly gleam, from its ghastly rushlight.

"I was a-meditatin' on this an' on that, when the ringing report o' a rifle brought me to my feet.

"I thought it was the fellars o' my tribe a-comin' back for me, so I screeched out at the top o' my lungs—Injuns! —Injuns!

"But I was wrong again, gents, the Injuns had not come.

"The old trapper's clever imitation o' the prarie wolf, assured me as how I hadn't the slightest cause for alarm.

"'Ye see boy,' said old Jake rushin' up, 'I thought as how ye'd be frightened when I fired that ere shot; but my finger was on the trigger and off it went, before I could as much as say stop! to it.'

"'Why Jake,' says I 'yer don't believe I'm so stupid as to mistake the sound o' yer shootin'-iron for one o' them durned red skins, I hope.'

"'You air a boy to be sure,' sez Jake Laughlin'. 'Wall, as for myself, I could never tell one sound more'n another. But they do say that them as is brought up with the thievin' skunks for awhile, can tell almost anything.'

"'Wall, that's a kinker about true, Jake,' sez I.

"'Wall, my boy,' sez he again, 'I must tell ye only for that 'ere bit o' shootin' ye might a gone to bed without yer supper.'

"'Possible?' sez I.

"'Possible, indeed,' sez he. 'Ay, indeed, boy, Jake was never in all his born day's so hard set as he was to-night; but Providence favored him with a steady hand an' a fair shot, and there'll be no more fastin' for some time, I reckon.'

"Did it ever fall to yer lot, boys," said old Rube, turning slowly upon his companions. "Did it ever fall to yer lot, to eat half-broiled venison steaks? Fast thirty-six hours, an' with the sarce o' hunger sharpenin' yer teeth, if yer don't put 'em out o' sight quicker nor a flash, say I'm a hoss, that's all.

"Wall. I went at my supper like a brick. I never ate so ravenously before, nor since.

"As we finished our meal, my eye naturally wandered

to that strange old candlestick, as if tryin' to diskiver the mystery of its bein' so many feet above its proper level.

"Jake was more'n sad that night, an' it struck me that he manifested a kinder strange tenderness for the horrid thing."

"Old Jake seemed to read my thoughts, he cleared his throat an' said mournfully:

"'She's there, boy!' pointin' to a little star that twinkled alone in the heavens.

"'Where?' sez I, at loss to understand his meaning.

"'There!' sez he again, (he was quite excited)—'yes, the owner o' that is *there*—in heaven, boy!"

"I was beginnin' to understand him now myself.

"'You wur expectin' summut from me to-night,' old Jake said sadly. 'Wall, I'll not disappoint ye.'

"'I'll tell ye my story the first time, I've told it to a soul livin'. But yer a brave boy, an' I'm not afeared it 'll go any farther' till old Jake goes to find his dear ones above the skies.

"'I was not always old Jake Heggenbottom, boy,' sez he, 'nor did I always lead the wild life I'm leadin'; but ye know old habits air wonderfully strong,' sez he (I believe these war his exact words), 'an' they'll show in a man in spite o' himself.' (Which I think a fact, from later experiences in my own life, an' in the lives of a great many o' you around this blessed tree).

"'Who,' said he, continuin', 'who, to see old Jake as he now stands, would think that he sprung from one o' the wealthiest an' most aristocratic families in New York City?'

"From that ere moment I put old Hig down as a genuine gentleman, an' so he was; but let us go on with our story.

"'Yes,' he continued in the best kind o' langwidge that ever kem from a mortal's lip, 'who'd think that I had the accomplishments an' refinement of a gentleman? But no matter those times are past an' gone,' sez he, 'Yet they often strike some sad chords in my heart.'

"'I was twenty-two,' said old Jake, 'when I left college

for my native city with fortune an' friends, which would turn the brain of any man. They were my ruin. Bad associations led me from a stainless career, to the gaming table; to dens o' vice an' infamy; to every place where virtue was unknown.

"Then can it be wondered,' sez old Jake, fastening his eyes on me, 'that he becomes the scourge of society, looked up to only for his wealth; but secretly hated an' despised—that he loses all principle—that he sinks deeper an' deeper into the foul gutters of his own makin', until at last he commits some flagrant outrage on his fellow-man, an' he's forced to fly to avoid the penalty. *I* am that man."

"I never before saw old Jake so excited.

"He looked wild enough at that moment to frighten any one, even if his nerves war as tough as steel, in that ghostly light. His wild locks floated in disorder over his massive shoulders, an' his long, bony finger pointin' to himself.

"'Yes, I am,' he screamed. 'Do I look like a murderer?'

"'No,' sez I, almost shakin' in my boots with a nameless terror.'

"'But I am,' he continued, 'morally the murderer of my poor parents, whose grey hairs I brought in sorrow to the grave.'

"I felt a sense of relief now. Because I loved the old man as a father.

"'An' do you think,' sez he, 'that a debased wretch like me would fly home, fortune, friends for that alone? No, no,' sez old Jake—'I tell you No! I murdered——'

"Then he paused, an' peered over the ghastly skull into starlit night, an' pointing his long fingers into the darkness, wildly cried:

"'There—there he is! off! off! Don't come near me! keep away I tell you!' an' dropped senseless to the earth.

"I thought the old man must have been mad to go on

so. I reasoned that there warn't a word o' truth in what he said o' the murder, so I set about recoverin' him.

"With very little coaxing he kem to again.

"'I'm in a strange mood to-night,' the trapper said, 'but I must speak—I must tell you why I carry it with me.'

"'In all my troubles there was one gentle creature who never deserted me; and whose kind heart opened a way to my better nature. If I loved ony one in this earth it was her.'

"'And oh, if I had but obeyed her warnin's, how different our after lives might have been; but no, I was mad—I would not listen to the voice of that angel.'

"'One midnight at the gamin' tab e, heated with passion and wine, I shot one of my ruffian companions, and they called it murder. I was forced to fly to save my neck; but my darling would share my perils, an' secretely marryin' under an assumed name, we came out here.'

"It was a fatal day! Oh, God! a fatal day!" groaned Jake.

"I trapped some an' kept a ranche," he continued; an' soon had two little prattlers climbin' up my knee; but it wasn't long to be; such happiness couldn't last for a murderer. One mornin' I went out a trappin'; but many miles further than usual, and when I returned—Oh! God! what a sight! The Indians had been there, and my family was dead—my little prattlers were literally hewn to pieces, and my angel-wife had died of a hundred wounds, defending her darlings. Will ever that bitter moment pass away?" cried the poor old man, with the tears streamin' down his worn cheeks—"will ever that bitter moment pass away from old Jake's memory?"

"Here Jake buried his face in his hands and wept like a little child

"'I'm an old trapper, boy,' sez he, 'don't take any notice o' me—no one does.'

UPB

"So the Skull, gents, which I was wishing all kinds of harm to was the last relict of an affectionate wife.

"Every calm night for years old Jake kept that solitary light burning in its Skull Candlestick; an' when he died I put it in the grave with him. That's my story, gentlemen—of the SKULL CANDLESTICK," ended Rube the Rattler with a deep sigh.

"How comes it, Rube," said one of the company, "that your English is sometimes so very good, and at others so very bad."

"Lor' bless the man," said old Rube, smilingly. "don't ye see that it comes a kinder nateral to me. Did ye think that old Jake Higginbottom left me without improvin' my English. Not he—the old man was edi atin' me up to the very day he died."

While Rube the Rattler was still speaking, the scouts returned accompanied by one of the brigands; and, as luck would have it, it proved to be none other than Reginald Barry.

They held a conference for about half an hour, then Reginald went back to the mountains to prepare Adele for her flight that night.

The bandit was resolved that there should be no blood spilt if he could prevent it, and swore solemnly that he would never betray his comrades for any reward, large or small, that they could afford to give him; but he also as ured them that he was a robber no longer, and that they might rely on him to the death.

Nevertheless they watched his figure with sundry misgivings until he had disappeared from sight.

What took place after that, will be given in the conclusion.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Reginald Barry, after his shooting of Snake-Eye, managed to successfully elude his pursuers, and arrived simultaneous with Captain Starke in his mountain fastnesses.

Adele had recovered, but she would not be comforted.

She loathed the very presence of this Captain Starke, and stigmatised the ruffian as the murderer of her brother.

She at last got into such a state of excitement, that the Captain wisely forebore intruding upon her, fearing, and very rightly, that if pressed at such a time, she might take her own life.

Perhaps this saved her from even a worse fate than ever death could have been.

The first day passed in the robbers' cavernous retreat, in much the same manner as it would to any wretched prisoner.

Thoughts of home and very dear friends, came flashing through the girls *mind*, and then the loss of her only brother, till she turned sick from retrospect. These were thoughts sad indeed; but when she dwelt on the probabilities of her own fate, she became, in her great agony, almost mad.

Late in the afternoon of the second day, Reginald Barry stole into her little granite-walled chamber, unknown to the captain, with the information that her brother and White Rattlesnake, assisted by a strong force of trappers, were in search of her. The maiden was all joy in a moment. "My poor brother lives," she kept saying, "Thank God for it.

"Heavens knows how tired I am of this life," said Reginald, sighing deeply, "and were it not for my misfortunes, I would never have been here. But never mind about that now," he added, "'tis past and gone, and there is even hope for one like me—a sinner—a wretch, and I was going to say, almost murderer—don't

shudder, lady; be not afraid of me—I will save you, even at the risk of my own life. But never will I betray those wretched men with whom I am associated. Hold yourself in readiness, for to-night you escape. They may do what they like when I am gone; but never will I bring betrayal on my guilty comrades."

The bandit spoke under great mental excitement, and the last words he uttered with much emphasis. Before she could speak, he was gone.

That night when his ruffian comrades were wrapped in slumber, Reginald again entered the chamber of Adele, and motioning the girl to follow him very cautiously, passed over the body of the drunken sentinel, and issued out into the darkened night.

They walked down the mountain's slope about a mile together without a word passing on either side, and halted in front of a number of ragged-looking rocks.

Instantly these crags seemed swarming with men. Adele uttered a little cry—it was a cry of joy, for next moment she was pressed to the palpitating heart of her brother, who covered over her face with his grateful kisses.

"Now," said Reginald in a subd[illegible]
the only good turn that's been in m[illegible]
It makes me feel what I used to feel, wh[illegible]
and better. And now, young man," addre[illegible]
"I have something more for you yet"—he [illegible]
roll of bills, which Devereux had been robbed o[illegible]
is your property—I restore it to you."

This act was greeted by the silent approval of the [illegible]pers; and one of them even went as far as to say that Barry was a "trump."

Reginald also intimated his intention of that night of leaving his dishonest life, [illegible]ever; but he again emphatically reiterated, that he would never betray the wretches he had associated with so long. Wilford forced him to accept a hundred dollars, to carry him to some far-off city where he could begin life anew; and with a single adieu the bandit disappeared in the grim

darkness, never more to return to the robbers' fastness.

There is little more to add. Captain Starke and his band being attacked in their cavernous retreat before morning were taken so completely by surprise that they offered a very weak resistance. The captain, however, defended himself with the greatest bravery. But he was stricken down by a pistol bullet as was also the low-browed ruffian Bill Grimes, who died cursing his enemies with his last breath. The remaining members of the band were captured, and after a protracted trial suffered extreme penalties of the law.

One day White Rattlesnake introduced to Wilford Devereux a lovely girl of sixteen summers.

"I promised," said the gallant hunter, "to tell you, who that mysterious spirit of the grove was—there she stands—my darling Daisy. She was our good spirit on that occasion, I assure you."

Wilford could not help expressing his admiration and astonishment, especially when he had heard that Daisy was the trapper's daughter.

And White Rattlesnake himself was very soon known un- [illegible] en Hepurn, once Harvard's ripest schol- [illegible] most noted hunter and Indian slayer on [illegible] rd, try how he would, could not prevent [illegible] ling in love with the trapper's pretty daugh- [illegible] e affection grew mutual. At last they ended up [illegible] ing each other. But there was a double marriage [illegible] y—White Rattlesnake had taken to the altar, Adele [illegible] ereux.

THE END.

or [illegible]